Alderman Cobden of Manchester

Sir · E · W · Watkin, Bart · M · P.

LTG
Sqrd
[1894]



James Edward Reiss.

Advocate of free trade whose agitation against the laws restricting the import of corn led to their repeal

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Alderman Cobden

of Manchester.

Edition de Luxe.

Four hundred copies printed for sale, of which this is

No. 89.

Signed E. W. Watts



RICHARD COBDEN at the age of 57.

(*Photographed from a Crayon Likeness.*)

Alderman COBDEN of Manchester.

Letters and Reminiscences of
RICHARD COBDEN,
WITH
Portraits, Illustrations, Facsimiles, and Index.

BY
SIR E. W. WATKIN, Bart., M.P.

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LONDON, NEW YORK, AND MELBOURNE.
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PREFATORY.

SHORTLY after the untimely removal from us, in 1865, of our great Economist, a member of the old Anti-Corn Law League, now deceased, desired me to entrust to him any letters written to me by Mr. Cobden, which, he stated, would be placed in the hands of Mr. Henry Richard, with much other correspondence, to be collated and published. I complied with the request, and heard no more about it. Some years elapsed, and after some difficulty and more delay, I regained the custody of documents that to me were invaluable.

I never heard what became of the intended labours of the late Mr. Richard,* but all of us who admired and loved Mr. Cobden, as I—one of his old followers—did, were

* Mr. Richard's own explanation is said to be given in the "Life and Correspondence of Peter Rylands, M.P.," published by his son, Mr. L. G. Rylands, but that is a book I have not seen. I observe also that the *Manchester Guardian* says of that explanation: "It is not the version which has been generally received." But what this other version may be I am equally unaware.

extremely rejoiced to welcome the admirable biography by the Right Honourable John Morley, M.P.

Mr. Morley told me, in answer to my inquiry, that no letters written by Mr. Cobden to me, or to my late father, had been placed at his disposal.

Believing that there might be something of public interest in these hitherto unused letters, I have caught hold of some leisure moments—scarce and irregular, indeed, with me—to string together, by short narrative, the bits of past history these documents illustrate.

I, at the outset, acknowledge gratefully the assistance I have received from my old, kind, and able friend, Mr. W. P. Stokes.

I may add, that an additional object has been to endeavour to place before Manchester the great services of Mr. Cobden, well nigh forgotten, in the foundation of the Manchester Athenæum, and as the man above all men, dead or living, to whom is due the credit of the establishment of popular local self-government in our city.

These were not the only local services of Mr. Cobden. For some years before his whole energies were absorbed by the cause of cheap food and free interchange, the questions of popular education, local voluntary schools, an university for the cotton districts, and so on, were amongst the many subjects of his advocacy. He was, in fact, the new light shining in our dark places, and his power of attracting minds of a similar cast towards his views, and of rousing the zeal of others, soon surrounded him with a circle which comprised the best men amongst us at that day.

In conclusion, I trust that this little contribution of mine may help to induce some great writer—and we in Manchester have one of the most brilliant as our next-door neighbour—to write a history of the Anti-Corn Law League, as seen from the heights of more than half-a-century of time.

I would plead with this distinguished man, that as "Free-trade, the Charter of the Nations," began the record of a triumphant agitation, he should hand down to posterity the brilliant experiences of the subsequent forty-five years.

He is aware that in the collection of letters to the President of the Anti-Corn Law League, the late Mr. George Wilson, there are hitherto buried treasures which would aid his labours, including the letter from Mr. Cobden to Mr. Wilson, written in the House of Commons on the celebrated night when Sir Robert Peel gave to "the unadorned eloquence" of Richard Cobden the merit of the triumph. That letter illustrates the unselfish, modest, just, honourable—nay, beautiful—side of Cobden's character, when after all his labours, sacrifices, anxieties, he writes, that he "never was so ashamed in his life," because the credit was far more greatly due to Villiers.

NORTHENDEN, near Manchester,
July, 1891.

[It is interesting to compare the passages in which Peel gave the credit of his Free Trade measures of 1846 to

Cobden, and of his Catholic Emancipation measure in 1829 to Grattan and others.

It was on June 29th, 1846, that Sir R. Peel ended his speech (announcing the resignation of his cabinet) in these terms:—

"There is a name which ought to be associated with the success of these (the Anti-Corn Law) measures; it is not the name of the noble lord the member for London (Lord J. Russell); neither is it my name. The name which ought to be, and which will be, associated with the success of these measures, is the name of a man who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has with untiring energy made appeals to our reason, and has enforced those appeals with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned. The name which ought to be chiefly associated with the success of these measures is the name of Richard Cobden."

To this I append a copy (from "Hansard") of the concluding portion of the reply of "Mr. Secretary Peel" in the debate on the Second Reading of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, 18th March, 1829:—

"I entreat hon. gentlemen who differ from me in opinion, to consider the altered position of affairs in Ireland since the annunciation of these measures of grace and favour has been made. To be defeated now—to throw the question back upon us—when a greater calm has been produced in Ireland than I ever knew to exist there—when there is no spirit of vulgar triumph displayed on the part of the Roman Catholics—and, in justice to the Protestants I must say it,

when their disappointment has been marked by the most patient submission—to lose the advantage which we have now gained, and to reject the solution which is within our grasp, would be attended with consequences so fatal to the repose of the Empire that I cannot even in fancy bear to contemplate them.

"One parting word, and I have done. I have received, in the speech of my noble friend the member for Donegal, testimonies of approbation which are grateful to my soul; and they have been liberally awarded to me by gentlemen on the other side of the House in a manner which does honour to the forbearance of party among us. They have, however, one and all awarded to me a credit which I do not deserve for settling this question. The credit belongs to others and not to me. It belongs to Mr. Fox, to Mr. Grattan, to Mr. Plunkett—to the gentlemen opposite—and to an illustrious and right hon. friend of mine, who is now no more. (Cheers.) By their efforts, and in spite of my opposition, it has proved victorious. I will not conceal from the House that, in the course of this debate, allusions have been made to the memory of my right hon. friend, now no more (Mr. Canning), which have been most painful to my feelings. An hon. baronet has spoken of the cruel manner in which my right hon. friend was hunted down. Whether the hon. baronet was one of those who hunted him down, I know not; but this I do know, that whoever did join in the inhuman cry which was raised against him, I was not one. I was on terms of the most friendly intimacy with my right hon. friend, down even to the day

of his death. And I say with as much sincerity of heart as man can speak, that I wish he was now alive to reap the harvest which he sowed, and to enjoy the triumph which his exertions gained. I would say of him, as he said of the late Mr. Perceval, 'Would he were here to enjoy the fruits of his victory!'

"'Tuque tuis armis: nos te poteremur Achille.'

"I am well aware that the fate of this measure cannot now be altered. If it succeed, the credit will belong to others; if it fail, the responsibility will devolve upon me, and upon those with whom I have acted. These chances, with the loss of private friendship, and the alienation of public confidence, I must have foreseen and calculated upon before I ventured to recommend these measures. I assure the House that in conducting them I have met with the severest blow which it has ever been my lot to experience; but I am convinced that the time will come—though I may not live to see it—when full justice will be done, by men of all parties, to the motives on which I have acted—when this question will be fully settled, and when others will see that I had no other alternative than to act as I have acted. They will then admit that the course which I have followed, and which I am still prepared to follow, whatever imputations it may expose me to, is the only course which is necessary for the diminution of the undue, illegitimate, and dangerous power of the Roman Catholics, and for the maintenance and permanent security of the Protestant interests."]

MR. COBDEN AND THE MANCHESTER CORPORATION.

BIOGRAPHIES of statesmen cannot dwell much upon episodes, or localities. Mr. Morley has only a few paragraphs for Cobden as a local reformer, and it would have been out of scale to have given more. The wider interest of Cobden's work for the nation, and for mankind, forbade it. Nor would the personal portraiture have gained such fresh illustration as to excuse it.

The more reason, perhaps, that this local chapter in a great career should have separate attention on its own account.

Yet the reader, drawn by interest in the man himself, will hardly complain because, in these gleanings from recollection and association, Cobden figures not as the local reformer only, but in more than one other phase and epoch of his public and private life.

In such a case, some discursiveness may be not unwelcome. A beginning is therefore made with a few points of strictly personal interest which it is well to have in mind. And none the less so because Cobden's biographers have dwelt on some of them before.

At the time here mainly spoken of, Mr. Cobden had

not lost in any degree the buoyancy and self-confidence which had served him so well in the early battles of life. Born in 1804, at thirty he had achieved a fortune through qualities of intellect and enterprise which all memoirs of him describe. With well-founded assurance of the stability of his mercantile income; with no prevision of the extent to which his private concerns were one day to suffer by withdrawal of his attention from them, Cobden was eager, at thirty-three, to follow the promptings of his public spirit.

Everything about the man, character and physiognomy alike, was indicative of the directness and sincerity that marked his public action, and through which, what was termed his "eloquence unadorned," was always as absolutely assured against a moment's dulness or prosing, as it was disdainful of the artifices of oratory. "You know," he said, at the end of one of his speeches, "I never perorate." And disregard of mere form was characteristic of him. No one could speak with less of gesture in his more animated moods, yet his manner and movements had none of the restraint or deliberation that belong, by nature or art, to men of different build or temper. Long after the League had triumphed, and his widest fame been won, Cobden, at forty-five to fifty, was still to be seen half skipping along a pavement, or a railway platform, with the lightness of a slim and almost dapper figure, and a mind full bent on its object. Yet with all the carelessness of "minor conventions," which Mr. Morley has noticed in him, it can only be a mistake to attribute to Cobden in



RICHARD COBDEN about the age of 20.

(*Photographed from a Miniature Likeness.*)

middle life anything of the sombre appearance in that popular likeness, the frontispiece of the shilling abridgment of Mr. Morley's work. And the portrait in the complete edition is, in other respects, most unhappy, doing him less justice still.

Mr. Cobden, as he looked in his prime, is very well portrayed in Herbert's large picture of the League in Council, the engraving of which was once widely circulated.* The likeness chosen as frontispiece to these pages is also one of the best, though not wholly satisfactory. Allowing for some of the fashions of his day (*e.g.*, the high cravat in the accompanying picture of him as a youth), Cobden's appearance was neat and trim, but it could never have been called sleek. Features and expression seem to have more or less eluded every attempt to "take" them, until a *carte-de-visite* by Adolph Beau proved strikingly true to what time had made of them in the closing years of life. Again, a worthier representation, or more faithful likeness, can hardly be imagined than Matthew Noble's statue of Cobden in Peel Park, Salford.

Another thing worth notice belongs to a different category. It is that Mr. Cobden's intervention in local affairs does not rate him one of those whose first school in statecraft was the business of their own parish.

Before he occupied himself much with the municipal needs of Manchester, Cobden had published pamphlets

* By the kind permission of Messrs. Thomas Agnew & Sons, the owners of the copyright, I am enabled (at page 101) to give a photographic reproduction of that interesting work.

upon international policy. He had travelled for self-instruction in America, Europe, and Asia. His first attempt to enter Parliament had been made in 1837.

True, as Mr. Morley relates, Cobden's earliest political work had been some anonymous letters in a Manchester paper (1835) on the incorporation of the borough. His earliest speeches had been education speeches at Clitheroe. Probably, also, as Mr. Morley surmises, it was in 1835 or 1836, in the interval between Cobden's visits to the West and the East, that he made his first public speech in Manchester, at "a small and unimportant meeting," again to advocate incorporation. It was in the same interval that he helped to found the Manchester Athenæum.

All this leaves Cobden still outside those ranks of local office-bearing, in which so many have trained themselves for the legislation or administration of their country.

It is remarkable that, down to nearly the end of 1837, though English local self-government, as it now prevails, had been one of the early fruits of the Parliamentary Reform of 1832, Manchester, for some reason, took no decided step in that direction. All through England local reform had been asserting itself, local oligarchy overthrown, and local corruption rooted out. Comparative freedom from abuses of the more flagrant kind may have made Manchester more acquiescent in an antiquated system.

In Wheeler's "History of Manchester" (1836), a chapter gravely opens with the statement that "the municipal government of the township is committed to the borough-reeve and two constables, who are elected at the court-leet

of the lord of the manor, by a jury of the most influential inhabitants, summoned by the deputy-steward of the manor." The writer seems quite unconscious that appointments proceeding from such a source were not in the spirit of municipal government at all. These officers, he explains, took "special cognizance" of the police of the township, numbering 30 men. The real working chief, however, was the deputy-constable, generally an officer of Bow Street training, or the like. But the nightly watch, numbering 125, with a reserve of supernumeraries; likewise the fire brigade, lamplighters, nuisance and other inspectors, were under the charge of a body called "the police commissioners" of the township, 240 in number. This is described as "a representative body," elected in 14 police districts of the town by the ratepayers assessed at £16 or upwards. The list of voters was prepared by the churchwardens of the township. The police commissioners appointed the gas directors, the town improvement committee, &c. Similar arrangements obtained in the borough of Salford, and also in what were then called the "out-townships"—Hulme, Ardwick, Chorlton, &c.—which made up the borough of Manchester.

It is not difficult to fancy the impatience and disgust of a mind like Cobden's at finding himself mixed up, by the accident of his mercantile success in Manchester, with the mediæval antics of the manor court: liable himself to be some day attached for the office of "reeve" or "constable": and once at least an unwilling member of the "jury" that forced the yoke upon others.

It is one thing to be called, Cincinnatus-like, from your own fields to the public service by the people's vote; it is quite another to be summoned by writ, under feudal rights of proprietorship.

No further off than Stockport, the municipal franchise had been already introduced. When Cobden's parliamentary candidature for Stockport, in the summer of 1837, had failed, and was done with, he was more at leisure to act upon observation there of the workings of the new system.

"Incorporate your borough!" was now Cobden's urgent cry to his Manchester neighbours. Five thousand copies of a letter, or pamphlet, of his own writing, with that cry for its text, or title, were circulated by him (as he said in a letter to Tait, the publisher, quoted by Mr. Morley) "with a view of gaining the Radicals," by showing the popular provisions of the Municipal Reform Act. "Will you credit it (Mr. Cobden added) the low blackguard leaders of the Radicals joined with the Tories and opposed us."

Nevertheless, the reforming spirit of Manchester shopkeepers was this time fairly kindled. At the first great public meeting held to petition for incorporation, "the shopocracy," said Cobden, in the above-quoted letter, carried the day over the "unholy alliance of Tory and Radical."

Hostile interests had taken alarm, and the first month of 1838 saw the beginning of furious and prolonged resistance.

Cobden's speech at that great meeting sets the inquirer on the track of the inner sources of the opposition. On the surface, the battle that now began between "corporators" and "anti-corporators" partook, indeed, of

the standing antagonism of political parties. Reformers and Whigs were on one side; Tories, Chartists, and Radicals were on the other. On placards the corporators were abused (Cobbett's ghost, one may suppose, applauding) as "Base, Bloody, Brutal, Devilish Whigs!" But below this surface there was something else.

It was certainly not as a Whig, or in sympathy with Whiggism, that Cobden took the field. In a letter of the same year, quoted by Mr. Morley, Cobden says of the Whig Government, in reference to this very question—"In the matter of municipal institutions, their hearts are against us." Truckling subserviency of the Whig Ministry to Tory menaces, or to "the party which bullies them most," was just in character with the conduct of the Whigs, he said, "on all questions, great or little." And at this same Manchester meeting, now to be noticed, Cobden declared himself a "Radical Reformer," though it was against Radical as well as Tory opposition that he assumed the lead.

The fact of his leadership is authenticated on the testimony of friends and foes alike. For years the same lips that banned the Manchester Corporation as a thing "accursed" and "infernal," assailed Cobden as its author and father.

But the feelings that prompted such expressions were more intense than even the political animosities of the time.

What claims notice first in Mr. Cobden's speech at the Town Hall (February 3rd, 1838), is his conviction that a mass of popular ignorance had been enlisted by an enemy

that knew better, and sinned against the light. "We do not seek incorporation as a party measure," he said, "but as one that should carry out the great democratic principle that men should govern themselves." But why, then, had a pseudo-democratic mob come to hoot it down? The greatest burst of cheering at this meeting was when Mr. Cobden commended the popular election of a town council as a mode of associating all classes of ratepayers on equal terms, educating the poorest or the lowest to a sense of independence, and (his own words) "taking these men out of the power of interested leaders."

Cobden's speech was, as far as the excitement of the meeting would allow it, an exposition of the process and method of incorporation—the equal vote of every ratepayer of three years' residence, and the yearly retirement of one-third of the town council in rotation. "Every year there will be," he said, "that delightful agitation which I love to see, an election of one common councillor for every ward; just enough to remind the other two that, if they don't behave themselves, their turn is coming."

Cobden was a speaker never unmindful of the circumstances in which he spoke, or the kind of audience he had before him. On this occasion he was argumentative and playful by turns; but above all things he must keep the ear of both sides. And sometimes there was no way better than to relieve his mind with what frequent hearers learnt to welcome, on familiar terms, as "one of Cobden's rages." A favourite cry against incorporation was its increased expense. "But," said Mr. Cobden, "the Muni-



MANCHESTER TOWN HALL, 1823—77.

(Now the Free Reference Library.)

cipal Act was passed with a view to give economy to town government—to deprive the oligarchy of their power, and to put it into the hands of the people. Will the people then impose heavy taxation and ruin upon themselves? Can anyone assert this but the vilest of the vile, those who are hired by ignorant, stupid Tories to clamour here?" Then of course there was a row, and the orator had time to take breath.

All through the speech there was the same note, of the mental helplessness of the opposing mass, played upon by a mere handful pulling the strings. Municipal election, Mr. Cobden said, must tend "to raise men from being under the bad advice of others—to place them above those who call themselves their leaders, and who would treacherously deceive them." After one of the interruptions he met with, he exclaimed, "There are many faces before me that I do not usually see here." Doubtless Mr. Cobden had often attended Town Hall meetings, though he had only lately become known as a speaker, and he could detect the foreign element that had been imported. "Do you think," he asked, "that the people brought here to uphold the cause of despotism can afford to pay for those placards of lies against incorporation, for which £200 has been paid within these twenty-four hours?"

Still flouting the bugbear of increased expense, Mr. Cobden had some things to say that were not entirely borne out by the course of events, because though corporators were economical, they could not control anti-

corporators who were prodigal. After showing, as already quoted, the mode and term of the elections, Mr. Cobden went on to say:—

"The town council elect the mayor, who will have, as chief magistrate, locally precedence over the Queen herself, if she came here. The lord lieutenant of the county is second to him in the borough. Can there be anything more democratic or republican than that? That is the system in New York. Well, immediately your town council have elected a mayor, they give the present body notice to give up the police office. I do not disguise from you that this will be preliminary to all the powers of the town—whether lighting, paving, or what not—passing into the hands of the council. For two bodies, one elected by household suffrage, the other by a £16 qualification, could not co-exist. It has been tried in Stockport, and it failed; all the powers had to be transferred. Then it is said, you will have the expense of new courts for magistrates, quarter sessions and assizes. But you need not have anything of the kind unless you wish. The council will have the power to nominate justices of the borough, and the Queen in Council will confirm their nominations. It is not a part of the Corporation Act that there should be magistrates. But since this arrangement came into force the appointment of every Liberal magistrate nominated has been confirmed by the Privy Council. And it does not follow because you have magistrates that it will entail expense. There are individuals who will be proud to be nominated, and to serve as mayor, &c. We had to

drag our present worthy borough-reeve (Mr. John Brown) to the office he holds, as a victim to a sacrifice; but in the corporate towns men go into the streets and lanes, with hats off, asking for votes. . . . . From none of the 200 towns of the kingdom has there come one complaint of the Corporation Act, except from the Tories. There is but one appointment that will necessarily be a salaried office—that of town clerk. And I say give your town clerk a salary, and don't let him have fees to the amount of many thousands a-year. You will save from another lawyer's office, that I need not name, £3,000 a-year by the appointment of a town clerk. You will then have the surplus fees paid to your borough fund, as is done at Stockport."

Recurring to this in another passage, Mr. Cobden said: "Give your town clerk £2,000 a-year, and you will save £4,000 out of an office that I won't name. Then we are told that if the town be incorporated we shall have the expense of quarter sessions. But we are not asking for any such thing. We only ask for incorporation. You can have quarter sessions afterwards if you wish for it, but there is no more need for it because you have your corporation than there is now. And if you cannot get rooms in this town for your magistrates to sit daily, let the town sue to me, *in formâ pauperis*, and I will not only find them a couple of rooms in my house* (laughter), but a good dry

* The accompanying representation of Cobden's house in Quay Street, in the midst of the town, is copied from Mr. Alderman Thompson's history of Owens College. The house became the college

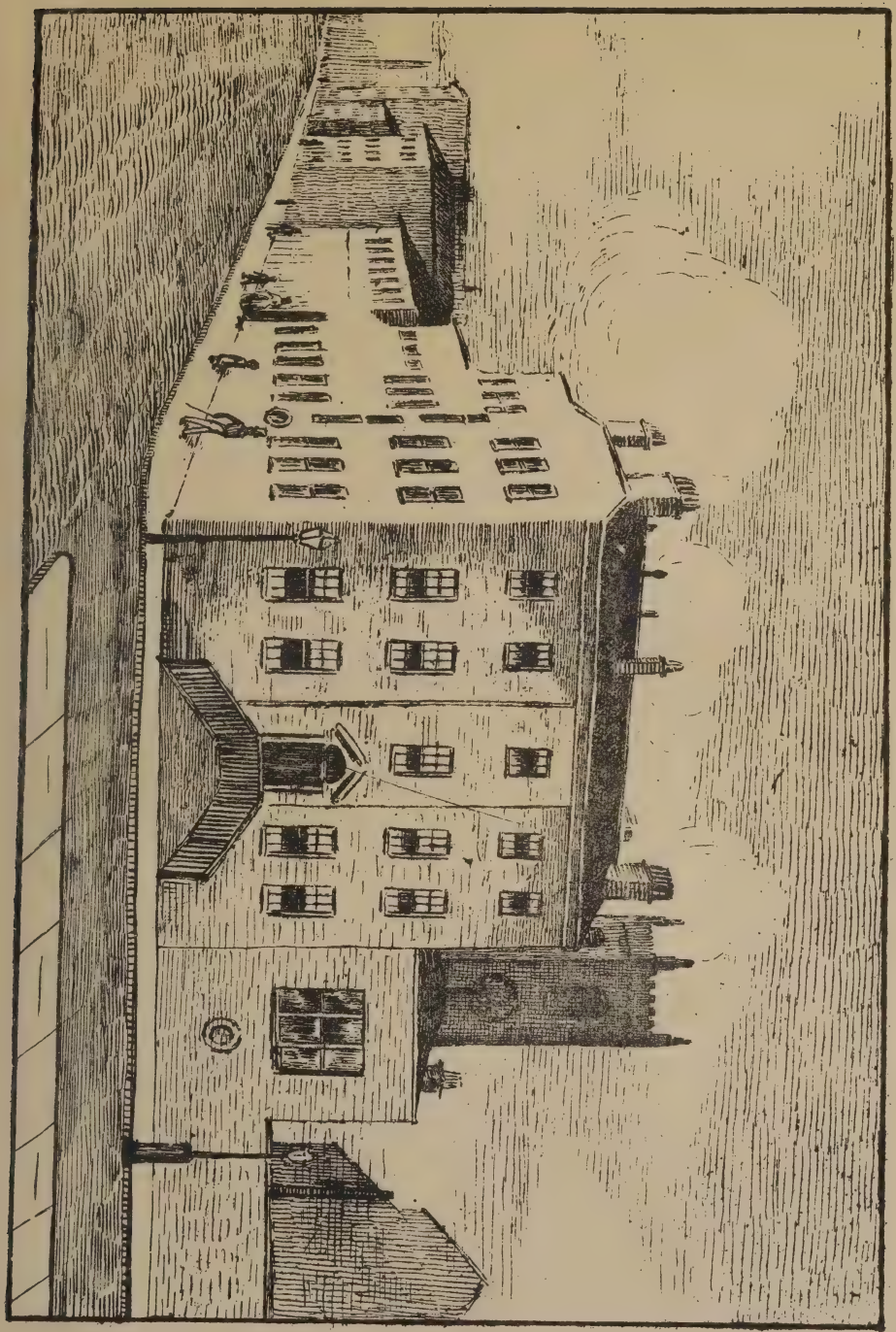
cellar for a lock-up into the bargain, big enough to hold all the operative Conservatives in Manchester." (Much merriment.)

Cobden was sceptical of the existence of "the Conservative working-man." He had the difficulty that besets men of strong convictions, of imagining the possibility that others could never share them. Long after this, speaking from the Huddersfield hustings in 1857, to the electors about to reject him, he exclaimed—"I give the people of England three years to come round to my opinions." Tone and manner conveyed the impression that the term of grace thus generously allowed to the speaker's countrymen was habitual with him, and not limited to the occasion of Lord Palmerston's latest examples of foreign policy.

So, in 1838, at Manchester, Mr. Cobden's own scorn of some of the older forms of pomp and symbolry made him treat them as a source of expense that was out of the question:—"Such corporation baubles," he said, "as maces, cloaks, and chains, would never be tolerated in Manchester: their day is gone by."

Half-a-century later, the Manchester Corporation has not only cloaks and chain, but £6,300 worth of plate (the latter a gift, however), and is thinking about a civic coach for its mayor. The cost is as nothing on a large assessment. And on this score Cobden, doubtless, was

itself in its infancy. It was a gift to the trustees of Mr. Owens by Mr. Faulkner, who bought it from Mr. Cobden many years after he had removed from it. The same house, slightly altered in appearance, (by a new doorway, &c.,) is now the Manchester County Court.



Mr. COBDEN'S *House in Quay Street, Manchester (afterwards the Owens College, and now the County Court). St. John's Church behind.*
[p. 18]

rather humouring than sharing the alarm of petty economists.

For his own part, Mr. Cobden would have disliked these things none the less had they yielded income instead of outlay. He could never have gone the length of the facetious pork-butcher in the town council, who, in the midst of a hot debate whether they should or should not provide themselves with gowns for the Queen's visit to Manchester in 1851, protested his readiness to "wear a pig-tail" if the etiquette of loyalty prescribed one. Needless to say, this gentleman did not stick at blue silk for councillors, black for the town-clerk, scarlet for aldermen, or jewelled chain for the mayor. And such was the prevailing sentiment, as shown by the "state" costume then, and ever since, adopted.

Mr. Cobden was similarly sanguine in his belief that the changes he had in view must be quickly accomplished. "We have nothing to say," he explained, "against the individuals who have been dragged to fill the offices of reeve and constables, I fervently hope and believe, for the last time."

But it took eight years from that time to extinguish those offices through the gradual transference of all their functions. So desperate was the resistance of opponents, fighting, as it were, to their last ditch of obstruction.

"We are not seeking," Cobden continued, "the overturn of old institutions merely because they are old, but because the old state of the government of Manchester is so decrepit and worn out that it has actually fallen to

pieces and gone to the death, as it were. (Cries of 'No,' and counter-cries.) I once sat at the Lord of the Manor's Court Leet, and there, in the company of gentlemen of all politics and shades of opinion, we came to the unanimous conclusion that, whether you adopt the Corporation Act, or an extension of your Police Acts, or whatever change you prefer, a change you must have, for the old state of things cannot exist any longer. Shall we go, then, for an extension of your Police Act, as has been proposed? Shall we choose, as proposed by Tory newspapers, that the Lord of the Manor, sitting in his parlour in Staffordshire, shall rule the town of Manchester: its people not only putting on his livery, but widening the extent of their feudal servitude, and very probably allowing him to make vassals of the people of Chorlton-upon-Medlock, of Hulme, and the other townships adjoining yours? (Cries of 'Never!') The proposition I have to submit to you is that we shall adopt the municipal state of government, which belongs already to every other great town in the kingdom except Birmingham, whose petition for it is now before the Privy Council."

Referring again to the case of the out-townships, and to opposition from their rulers, Cobden pointed to difficulties and dangers arising from divided control of the local police, which an incorporation of the entire borough would at once remedy. "Can there be," he asked, "anything more preposterous than that the little great men in these townships should come here and say, 'For the sake of our being great men in a little way, we will have a barrier across the streets

at the Medlock, so that the little rogues who have stolen peas and beans on the one side* may run across the bridge and say to the police-officer or the watchman from the other, "You dare not follow us!"' I am astonished that men who have wisdom enough to govern Chorlton-upon-Medlock should ever hold such strange ideas. I should as soon have expected that the worthy shopkeepers of St. Ann's Square or Ancoats Street would wish to have their shops under one government by day, and their dwelling-houses upstairs, or at the back, under another government by night."

Opposition speeches were made by leaders of the Tory-Radical alliance—speeches which, were this more of a local history, and less a chapter of biography, might have a claim to more than mention.

Mr. Cobden, in a short reply to them, ridiculed the idea that the Radicals or the Chartists had anything to hope politically from the existing local bodies. "You might as well," he said, "ask the sun to come out and shine at midnight, as ask your commissioners of police to pass a resolution for universal suffrage." He waived aside the proposal that Manchester should wait till other towns had had more experience of incorporation. He thought the plea for delay was transparently insincere. He allowed that the Corporation Act was in some respects imperfect—that some of its provisions were illiberal and absurd. He did not agree, for instance, in the property qualifications

* In those days "peas and beans" would be grown miles nearer the Medlock bridges than now.

prescribed for councillors and aldermen. He hoped to see working men—"the poorest mechanic"—qualified by their talents and integrity for seats on the bench of justice. But defects in the Corporation Act could not blind him to the greater faults of the system it was to supersede. "In this town," he said, "hitherto the most useful party have been excluded from all places of honour on account of their principles." He condemned as "monstrous" the fact that Catholics, Independents, Methodists, Baptists, and all Dissenters, had been invariably excluded from nomination for office. "To this day," he said, "the Test Act virtually exists in all its force in Manchester." And, for the encouragement of Radicals, doubtful of the effect of incorporation, he went on to assure them that whereas in many other places it often happened that the rich were exclusively Tory, in Manchester the richer men were commonly Liberals.

When Mr. Cobden warned the meeting to wait patiently while the speakers of the opposition sought to weary them with "ravings about the Dorchester labourers, the new Poor Law, or anything but the subject in hand," an active, burly, strong-lunged man in front of him shouted, "Same as yow do!" "I know not the individual," Cobden retorted, "who seems to take this to himself."

The great unknown was the locally celebrated Elijah Dixon, of Newton Heath, a sturdy Radical all through life, who had gone to prison for his share in demonstrations of earlier date than Peterloo. He outlived Cobden, and died the head of a prosperous firm of match manufacturers—

Dixon, Son, and Evans. He was long a prominent figure in Manchester meetings, and in this instance was one of the most persistent interrupters of Cobden's eloquence. Not many years before his death he was at a meeting in his own township ("on my own midden," he preferred to phrase it), protesting loudly against the notion that a man who could only set a brick was not as well fitted by education for the elective franchise as a man who could only read, write, and cipher.

But the meeting in 1838 acted on Cobden's advice: withstood the tactics of delay, and voted by a majority for incorporation.

According to the Act of Parliament, a petition to the Queen in Council to grant a charter was the next step to be taken, and in a very short canvass nearly 16,000 signatures were obtained. But the anti-corporators lodged with the Privy Council a counter petition, with from 30,000 to 40,000 names attached.* Then the character of the signatures was impeached on both sides, and the presumption against the pretended majority was certainly overwhelming. The drift of opinion among the ratepayers was known beforehand. But to put matters to the test the Government sent commissioners down to Manchester to hold a court of inquiry.

"I was engaged," wrote Cobden to Tait in July, "before the commissioners, employed in exposing the trickery of

* Contemporary reports gave differing totals to each petition, but in this place the discrepancy is not material enough to be probed to the bottom.

the Tories in getting up their petition. For three weeks I was incessantly occupied in the Town Hall. . . . . So important do I consider the step for the incorporation of the borough that I have been incessantly engaged at the task for the last six months."

Had the proceedings been open to the Press they would have yielded matter as entertaining and instructive in their way as any scrutiny of the kind that ever was held before election committees or judges. The canvassing for the corporators had been for the most part the unpaid work of men of respectability, whose hearts were in the cause. The signatures to the hostile petition had been mostly furnished by hired agents, some of whom had no sooner pocketed their wages than they went and offered their service to the other side, by owning to the most shameless, wholesale forgeries.

Not only had names been attached without their owners' leave or knowledge, but sheets upon sheets were filled wholly from imagination. One of the experts gave the commissioners satisfactory proof of his dexterity by repeating the process under their eyes. He also bore touching witness to the cleverness of a lamented comrade, who could invent names and addresses, and write them in the requisite variety of hands, as fast as it could have been done, and without feigning, by a practised copyist from directories. And this accomplished person's death, only a week or two before, was chargeable mainly to the fuss that people were making over his performance. Other features of the inquiry were the readiness of the corporators to assist the

commissioners in every way desired, and the neglect or inability of their opponents to give any aid whatever.

The results were so remarkable that, in order to place them further beyond doubt or cavil, the Government sent one of the commissioners to Manchester a second time to go through the personal labour of calling at hundreds of addresses, to prove the negative of signatures having been obtained there. A venturesome agent of the anti-corporators undertook to pick a hole in the signatures for incorporation, but he made precipitate retreat from the room on two occasions, being the only ones on which he could be brought face to face with a responsible witness for the party attacked.

When eventually the Queen in Council had granted the charter of incorporation, and it was received in Manchester in November, Mr. Cobden and his coadjutors were elected as town councillors; but they had still to face the most determined obstruction from the objectors.

The latter were armed with the official influence of the old authorities—police commissioners, overseers, churchwardens, county magistrates, and others—who refused to recognize the new corporation, or to obey or acquiesce in its ordinances.

A single firm of lawyers, with Mr. Oswald Milne at its head, had long conducted the legal business of the different local bodies. To use his own phrase, he was town clerk in all but the name. This firm had the clerkships in their hands, and therefore the fees, and all the consequent power. From this focus the network of alliance against the

corporation drew much of its unity of action. So generally was this understood, that when, after "seven years' apprenticeship," as it was termed, the corporation records were summed up by a retiring mayor (Mr. Alexander Kay), he did not trace the resistance which had been encountered to any political or public source; he thought it sufficient to say that, immediately on the grant of the charter, "a meeting of Mr. Oswald Milne's friends was held," at which the resolutions for resistance were agreed upon. How strongly the Milne interest was backed, however, by both party and professional sympathies, the activity of Tory lawyers, like Mr. Stephen Heelis (afterwards Mayor of Salford) and Mr. James Crossley (in later life a noted antiquary), sufficiently proved.

And, to give Mr. Milne his due, he had amply deserved that it should be so. He had led the local Tories with unimpeachable constancy. Ordinarily he had shown himself cool, cautious, and reticent, as well as able and full of resource. It may, indeed, have been the case that behind the leader there were others prompting him. For instance, he was doubtless supported by hints from headquarters in London when, on his advice, the people were attacked at the Peterloo meeting, August 16, 1819. But he was the recognized driver of the Tory coach, and every conceivable trick was to be tried to sustain him against the newly-invented machine of "the opposition."

In the first place, the registration of municipal voters was protested against and impeded. Then the Tory party ostentatiously held aloof from the elections. When a

council full of Liberals had been returned, it was denied admittance to the Town Hall, in King Street. It was in the York Hotel, next door, that the first meeting was held, to choose aldermen (Cobden being one), and a mayor (Mr. Thos. Potter), on Alderman Cobden's nomination. For some months the civic body could do little beyond taking measures—and these were certainly enough to occupy it—to preserve its own existence from the assaults of its enemies.

At first the talk on their part was of an immediate appeal to the law courts. Various flaws were alleged in the validity of the Royal grant. The point most commonly advanced was the absence of an ascertained majority of inhabitant householders in favour of the charter. In the subsequent discussions the corporation party showed some willingness to admit that the signatures to the adverse petition, making all deduction for some 20,000 that were spurious, did possibly outnumber somewhat those on their own side. But that the latter could have been greatly multiplied by a longer canvass they felt no doubt. It was further maintained that the Municipal Act gave the Queen in Council full discretion to act on such evidence as had been furnished of the dominant feeling of the inhabitants. An ascertained majority was not essential.

More than two years afterwards this view was affirmed by most of the judges of the Exchequer Chamber. But matters had been kept in suspense in the meantime, and the process by which the judgment was obtained was curiously indirect. Possibly owing to the promptitude with

which the leading supporters of the corporation (Alderman Cobden among them) subscribed a guarantee fund of nearly £30,000, the threatened litigation on the main issue was not proceeded with. Instead of this the opposing faction applied themselves to throwing every practicable obstacle in the way of the town council doing its work.

Thanks to the liberality of the guarantors, the duty of forming a new and more adequate police force for the entire borough was taken in hand, though the overseers refused to levy the rates which the council ordered. Tory magistrates at county sessions were relied upon to shield the overseers from penalties thus incurred, and also to keep hostile overseers in office.

Contrary, therefore, to Mr. Cobden's anticipations, the town council found it best to obtain a separate commission of quarter sessions for the borough as soon as possible, and, through the borough bench, a new body of overseers.

These gentlemen went in the customary way to tender their services at the office of the churchwardens. The latter declined to recognize them, or to administer the oath of office. A brief scene ended with the borough overseers swearing in each other, there and then.

But a counter-list of overseers, nominated by the churchwardens, was accepted by some of the county bench at the New Bailey. It was an utterly irregular act, eventually quashed, but for the time being it answered the purpose of vexation and delay. The old authorities and

the new went on levying rates in opposition, the inhabitants being warned by each party not to pay a farthing to the other.

The new justiciary was not complete without a coroner, and Mr. James Chapman, being one of the candidates for the office, received the vote of the town council. Had the county coroner, Mr. Rutter, presented himself as a candidate, it is not unlikely that he would have been welcomed, at any rate by Mr. Cobden and others, in whose eyes his intimate connection, both past and present, with the office of Mr. Oswald Milne, would have been no insuperable objection. But instead of applying for the borough coronership, and so recognizing the new establishments, Mr. Rutter brought an action against Mr. Chapman for presuming to hold an inquest.

It was, therefore, as a mere issue in the action for trespass—*Rutter* v. *Chapman*—that the great question of the validity of the Manchester charter of incorporation came to be determined at law.

Nearly two years had still to pass before the decision was reached, and till then the rival coroners held inquests in duplicate, fighting a legal battle over some hundreds of the dead, and, in one case, coming to blows, that produced the counter-action of "*Chapman* v. *Rutter*." It was not the only affair of the kind which these protracted troubles bred. The local air was highly charged with provocation. Duels were challenged, though not accepted, and a brace of local editors were sentenced for setting upon a third in St. Ann's Square. But their

victim had the magnanimity to beg them off, so they escaped imprisonment.

While the borough coroner was obstructed by official refusals to find him juries, the new borough police force, though recruited fast enough by the rank and file of the older ones which it was to displace, found itself barred out by their chiefs from the half-dozen station-houses and lock-ups which the town then possessed.

Thereupon the corporation took out summonses against the officials concerned, which were returnable at the new borough police-court (opened June, 1839). When the case came on there, the Town Clerk (Mr. Heron—afterwards Sir Joseph) was forestalled in his opening statement by the rising of that clever but erratic barrister, Charles Wilkins (afterwards Serjeant), then, perhaps, better known as a Tory agent than in any other character.

Seven years before this he had been roundly abused in *Cobbett's Register* as the "mountebank actor," "the player-man of the PRIGS, in regular pay of the THING up at London"; or, to use words of less alarming type, an ally of the Potter family against Cobbett at the first Manchester election. Wilkins retained through life an air suggestive of his early connection with the stage. Rather above the middle stature, with a broad chest, pink face, dark brown hair, a cool eye, a fine tenor voice, his was a good presence taken all in all, and but for his fondness for company and good living he might have become a great man. As it was, he was a remarkable one.

On the occasion now in question, Mr. Wilkins intimated

that the object of his appearance was to protest against the proceedings and to signify contempt for the tribunal he was addressing.

But Mr. Wilkins probably knew, or, if he did not, he was quickly taught, that the new court was in strong hands.

Not long before this the stipendiary magistracy of Manchester at the New Bailey had been relinquished by Mr. J. F. Foster on his appointment to be chairman of the county sessions. The office he thus vacated had been conferred upon a Yorkshire barrister, Mr. Daniel Maude. This was while the petition for incorporation was still in its earlier stages. When the corporation had come into being, and while the appointment of a separate stipendiary for the new court was delayed for years by the continued struggle over the charter, no legal or other doubts deterred Mr. Maude from giving his services to the new bench as well as the old. And that which he had thus practically recognized as a reality he would not let others treat as a sham. Mr. Wilkins, he presently remarked, must be aware that "he could not go on in that way."

Mr. Wilkins attempted to continue, but Mr. Maude would not have it. "Indeed, I shall," said Mr. Wilkins. "No, you will not," said Mr. Maude. And the last word held good.

Maude's attainments as a lawyer were eminent and unquestioned. And, though his manners and appearance were unassuming, or, perhaps, insignificant, when off the bench, yet, seated in the chair of justice, with a big head

thrown back, the scanty remnant of tawny locks brushed across its baldness, spectacles pushed high above large sleepy-looking eyes, and resting on a broad, capacious forehead, the figure grew sufficiently lion-like. With no pretence at roaring, the voice was penetrative and decided. The new court was not to be trifled with, and the Wilkins demonstration went no further than adding one to the multitude of proofs of anti-corporate pertinacity.

In however faint a sketch of the many swirlings of such a storm, its hero-in-chief must sometimes be lost to view. Mr. Cobden had, indeed, simultaneously with his election to the town council, become definitely committed to the grand agitation against the Corn Laws. From the beginning of the year 1839, therefore, his merely local work, like his private business, must have had diminished regard. For a year or two, nevertheless, his aldermanic functions were conspicuous enough. Mr. Cobden was not a frequent speaker at council meetings, even while he could be regular in his attendance. Debates and details were much more commonly left to others whose share in the establishment of the corporation, however considerable, was secondary to Cobden's, or to George Wilson's, or to William Neild's. Those were the three names to which Alderman Kay, in his above-mentioned retrospect, gave the leading place as founders. He named Mr. Potter (afterwards Sir Thomas) as their staunch and powerful ally. He might not immodestly have said something also for one whom he passed over altogether, viz., himself. But, the corporation once started, its proceedings were ordinarily in the

hands of men who could give them time and energies that had not been available or capable for the effort of bringing it into being.

Alderman Cobden's speeches in the council were, as might have been expected, reserved for the wider questions that came before it. The most strictly local matter in which he thus intervened was the site of the Post Office. It seems to have been very largely Cobden's doing that a removal was made from the Exchange, or closely adjacent, to a situation that was considered more central, and which has been ever since retained. On this point opposite opinions were strongly held, and the discussion was not free from imputations of self-interest to Exchange proprietors on one side, and to Mosley Street merchants on the other. Cobden joined also in giving the council's support to railway extension between Manchester and London, for the first of the direct routes was not yet opened. And of course Mr. Cobden spoke as well as voted for the Manchester Corporation pronouncing, as did the Common Council of London, in behalf of Corn Law Repeal.

Mr. Cobden was called as a witness for the defence (undertaken by the corporation) in the trial of *Rutter* v. *Chapman*, at Liverpool, August 22nd, 1839, but his evidence was little more than formal. Examined by the Whig Attorney-General, Sir John (afterwards Lord Chancellor) Campbell, Mr. Cobden said he had been a member of the committee appointed to prepare the Manchester

petition for incorporation; that he was also on the executive committee to receive the signatures obtained by canvassers; that he assisted in putting the sheets together in order; and that he was one of those engaged in carrying the petition to London, and delivering it at the Privy Council Office. He had probably collected fifty to one hundred signatures himself.

This trial for trespass upon the county coroner's jurisdiction had resolved itself immediately into a question of the validity of the charter. It was therefore sought by the plaintiff's counsel, Mr. Cresswell (afterwards Sir Cresswell Cresswell, the Divorce Court judge), to reopen the scrutiny of some 40,000 signatures. But Mr. Baron Maule lost no time in stopping him. A ready calculation had enabled his lordship to perceive that the course just entered upon would occupy him and the special jury for three years on end, at eleven hours a-day, Sundays excepted. So the bench and the bar had a legal argument of an hour or so, the judge being clearly of opinion that the charter was valid, and directing the jury to return a verdict for the borough coroner, subject to a bill of exceptions to be pleaded by the county coroner in a higher court.

Even when the higher court had given judgment (1841) on the same side, an appeal was talked of. But by that time events had taken a turn which led to these proceedings being dropped. Instead of resistance to incorporation, the policy of its opponents became one of compensation for three lawyers (viz., Mr. Harper, clerk of the peace for the county; Mr. Rutter, county coroner; and Mr. Oswald

Milne, clerk to magistrates, &c., &c., &c., &c.), whose fees had suffered by its establishment.

Read in this later light, something of the hue of prophecy appears in the remarks of Alderman Cobden, at a council meeting in November, 1839. Moving a vote of thanks to the mayor, Mr. Cobden drew attention to the singular fact that throughout the struggle of the past two years the enemies of the corporation had been practically invisible. The opposition had never held a large meeting. "Sharpshooters there have been," he said, "riflemen firing at us from behind ambuscades; but no great body of forces, marching with avowed objects, and recognized leaders, to oppose the charter. In these circumstances we must seek for the nature and character of the opposition in some occult cause." Mr. Cobden went on to express a hope that the authors of vast trouble and expense would be some day exposed; and he made it something of a reproach to the friends of incorporation that they had not taken such pains to inform their poorer and more ignorant fellow-townsmen of the true nature of the privileges it gave them, as would have rendered the Tory-Radical alliance impossible.

He had entered into this movement for incorporation in furtherance of the principle of self-government. "No one has ever heard me say that the town had been badly managed. There have been men as able, and honest, and indefatigable, on the Tory side as on the Liberal side, to work for the town. But what I wanted to see was the people of Manchester exercising judgment and discretion

themselves, and electing good men themselves, instead of men being elected under an old system which I should consider unjust to the ley payers at large."

As long as the judgment in the coroners' case was withheld, Cobden and the corporation were still in the thick of the fight, and to a great extent the local reforms they had in view were paralyzed by the opposition. At the annual elections to the old body of police commissioners, in 1838, the anti-corporators, by a sudden manœuvre, managed to oust nearly all those friends of incorporation, such as Mr. John Edward Taylor, who had taken a leading part in the town's affairs. Their places were filled with staunch old Tories of the type of Mr. Thomas Sowler.* It was but a snatch victory, as the turning of the tables soon showed; but it had the rather striking effect of occurring almost at the moment when the incorporation party rejoiced in obtaining the charter.

During its first year, therefore, the new corporation was confronted by a hostile majority in the police commission. But in the latter part of that year (1839), when the police commission elections came round again, the corporators were nearly everywhere successful. Alderman Cobden, then living in Quay Street, failed in his nominations of commissioners for his own district of St. John's. But elsewhere the clean sweep that was made of leading anti-corporators went so far as to excite regrets on the winning side, when it was seen that among the ostracized was a

* Father of the late Sir Thomas Sowler.

man so generally respected as Mr. Thomas Fleming, the promoter of the Market Street widening and many of the greatest local improvements for twenty years back.

Another incident of the conflict at this time was the interposition of the Government to protect the town from dangers that were imminent. The anti-corporators had borne with much composure the taunt that self-styled "Conservatives" set themselves against the enlargement and consolidation of the borough police, and hampered the action of the magistracy at a time when turn-outs, sedition, and rioting were rife; when the "physical force Chartists" and other malcontents were meeting and drilling and "demonstrating" by torchlight; when Feargus O'Connor, and Joseph Rayner Stephens, and a host of less-known firebrands, were inflaming the feelings of a famine-stricken people. But the Home Office could not view with unconcern the prospect of mob violence occurring while the local authorities were at war with each other. It was resolved, pending the determination of the validity of the charter, to take the police out of the hands of both the local parties, and appoint a chief-commissioner with full powers. An Act of Parliament created the office, and it remained in existence till the end of September, 1842.

The corporators were, in principle, opposed to an interference of this kind by the central power, and they acquiesced in it only as making the best of a situation of things which their opponents had created. The latter were in no such compliant humour; and no sooner was

the appointment of Sir Charles Shaw as chief-commissioner made known than he came in for a share of their ill-will. Sir Charles was a distinguished officer of the British Legion in Spain. After nine years' proof of bravery in the field, he had been content to take out a summons against some person who had assaulted him in England; but it pleased his *impromptu* foes at Manchester to rake this matter up, and represent that here was a cowardly adventurer sent to rule them—a so-called colonel in a foreign service, who had never been more than a lieutenant in the British; and whose coming home was signalized by a horse-whipping which he must doubtless have deserved!

Earlier in the year a somewhat similar outburst of spite had assailed that very high-minded, professionally eminent, amiable, and universally respected man, Mr. John Frederick Foster, the predecessor of Mr. Maude as stipendiary magistrate. When Mr. Foster took office as chairman of the county sessions, men of all parties vied with one another in paying him compliments, and presenting him with a testimonial. When, in his new position, he had some of their obstructive doings brought before him, Mr. Foster had to give a judicial decision which did not meet the views of the anti-corporators. And when, soon after this, Mr. Foster accepted the offer of the corporation that he should be Recorder of the new Borough Court of Quarter Sessions, calumny hastened to retract the recent eulogies, and discern in his conduct a sinister sequence of motive. Mr. Foster resigned the Recordership at

once, and the office was given to Mr. Armstrong, afterwards M.P. for Lancaster. The public esteem that remained with Mr. Foster is still commemorated by his statue in the Manchester Assize Courts.

But Sir Charles Shaw was not to be driven or frightened away. He filled his difficult and delicate position at Manchester with a degree of tact and discretion that put the aspersers to shame. The police under his charge had at times to undertake duties which anti-corporate nuisance controllers had left undone. His administration did not prove more acceptable in the circumstances than had been hoped for. It was expensive, and perhaps extravagant. Under the terms of his appointment, Sir Charles levied the police rates himself, he somewhat reduced the new police force in numbers, and was not thought very happy in his choice of lieutenants. The end of his rule was hailed with pleasure by the local reformers. It had, however, the merit perhaps of meeting the exigency of a very troublous time, which included the distress, the turn-outs, and the plug-drawings of 1842. Sir Charles's generalship on the last of these occasions was much questioned. He himself was rather proud of the successful application of the fire-hose as a recipe for mob dispersal. The force of cold water was irresistible, and while nobody was wounded by it, drenched clothes identified the runaways.*

* Serjeant Wilkins (already mentioned) had a notion of his own for such emergencies, but it was of strictly local and defensive application. "You simply pay a halfpenny at the toll-bridge," was his gleeful explanation to an election meeting, how he stopped a Manchester mob in full cry after him at Blackfriars.

The advent of Sir Charles Shaw had been coincident with the election of a "borough-reeve and constables" who were friends of incorporation. This, coupled with the corporate majority in the police commission, was a sore trial to the temper of the anti-corporators. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that when, instead of the customary invitation from the churchwardens to the reeve and constables to share their pew at the Collegiate Church (now the Cathedral) during the year of office, the invitation expressly excluded the two constables, on the ground of room being required for Sir Charles Shaw: the departure from usage was interpreted as a slap in the face for the elected Liberals. The uninvited constables asserted their right of entry to the official pew, and it was, perhaps, by diplomatically absenting himself that Sir Charles Shaw avoided greater scandal. But Sunday after Sunday similar embarrassments were repeated.

Alderman Cobden seems to have thought it would not be amiss if the churchwardens themselves had a taste of reform, and when Easter brought their turn for election he proposed a Liberal list. He had to make himself the centre of one of those tumultuous scenes by which the nave of the "Old Church" was so often disgraced. Two thousand people gathered there from all parts of a then undivided parish, which stretched as far as the Mersey at Stockport. When Cobden was hissed and howled at in his nominations, he turned upon the disturbers and said, "I may tell these noisy gentlemen that they are inconveniencing themselves more than me, for here I will stay

till midnight, or I will be heard." He objected to the principle and practice of the retiring body naming their own successors. He had no objection to their nominees, on the score of personal character; but he commended the men of his choice (Mr. D. Price, Mr. C. J. S. Walker, and Mr. G. Hall) as "infinitely more fit for the duties, and infinitely more in accord with the sentiments of the community." Here occurred an interruption, through the activity of an individual notorious as "a lodging-house keeper in Blackley Street." Blackley Street! Pronounced as "Blakeley Street," the place was so infamous in both hemispheres that thieves and rogues could cross the Atlantic with no other address in Europe to guide them to a place of refuge. One of the earlier works of the new corporation was to let daylight into that sink of wickedness, and disguise its name as Charter Street. But Blackley Street was part of the parish, and its voice was raised against Cobden's. So was Elijah Dixon's. So was Radical Wroe's.

Mr. Cobden did not prolong the scene: he said his churchmanship was sufficiently strong to have more regard for the sacred character of the place. Tories and Radicals had a doubtful victory on show of hands; and when a poll was taken afterwards their alliance prevailed; partly, perhaps, because the Cobden party had not quite prepared the machinery of the contest (day after day many of their voters turned away, baffled by mere crowding at the poll-office); partly, also, through popular prejudice

against the application of the new Poor Law in the town, another of the questions on which Reformers and Whigs were not uncommonly ranged on one side; while Tories and Radicals took the other.

A month later, Alderman Cobden was moving the town council to oppose a Bill introduced by Mr. Fox Maule, Lord J. Russell, and Mr. E. J. Stanley, the effect of which would have been to carry the principle of centralization to the point of danger to local freedom. It was nominally a Bill to Amend the Act for the Establishment of County and District Constabulary. Mr. Cobden pointed out that some of its clauses would vest the management of the police of boroughs in the Home Office instead of in the town councils. A Committee of the House of Commons was taking evidence on the subject, and Mr. Cobden had been called before it to speak to the accuracy of some reports of the Manchester Statistical Society on the local government of towns. He had then perceived a disposition to centralize, which, if left unchecked, would aim a deadly blow at the local corporations. He considered the Whig Government were doing their best, by such a Bill as this, "to enable some future Government to rule the country with a rod of iron." On Mr. Cobden's motion the town clerk was instructed to address the authorities of the smaller boroughs, with a view to combined opposition. In the result the obnoxious clauses were dropped.

All through 1840 the local action of the corporation was fettered by the judges' delay in deciding the charter ques-

tion. Sir C. Shaw held the police in hand, independent of party struggles, and nearly everything proper to the jurisdiction of a town council was still withheld from it. The hostile portion of the county magistrates disputed the power of the borough bench to make committals to the New Bailey prison. Prisoners were received only on the committal of such borough magistrates as were in the county commission of the peace, and the trials took place at county sessions only. For the time being Recorder Armstrong and his borough sessions were as good as stranded. The fees for prosecutions were kept flowing in the good old channels, and as long as this lasted the enemies of the corporation had cause of joy. But perhaps the conviviality on Mr. Cobden's failure to change the churchwardens was more rapturous, not to say uproarious.

In Mr. Oswald Milne's speech on that occasion he seemed to adopt as his own an expression attributed to someone else,—that what some incorporators desired was to "dive into the public purse." The grace of this utterance from a man popularly supposed to be in receipt of £7,000 to £8,000 a-year as official fees, was contrasted with the known readiness of men like Cobden, Neild, and Potter to pledge their private means in the cause of civic reform.

But while the churchwardens and county magistracy remained hostile, the police commissioners were becoming more and more pro-corporate. Their elections in 1840

left the Reform majority of 1839 undiminished, and at those of 1841 the anti-corporators made no effort to shake it.

The judicial verdict in the Rutter-Chapman case had by that time considerably cleared the ground. To upset the charter was now a thing practically recognized by the opposition as past praying for. Hostile overseers and others began more anxiously to count the costs for which they were rendering themselves personally liable by their obstruction. Distraint of goods and chattels was a weapon flourished with fine effect. Negotiations for referring matters to arbitration were set on foot by some few gentlemen on each side, who thought a compromise might now be possible. But the attempt broke down on the refusal of the corporation representatives to admit in principle that compensation was due from the borough funds to those who were losers by the recent changes. The utmost they would agree to was that the corporation should pay anything that the arbitrators or an umpire might award.

From this time onward "compensation" was the word which, stripped of all disguise, took the place of "corporation" as symbolic of the remaining controversy.

In the preceding years of turmoil it had been not uncommon for friends as well as foes of incorporation to look back upon the old *régime* as one in which local affairs had long been exempt from political party spirit. Any wrangles or quarrels of the police commission, the gas directors, or the town improvement committee, were

said to have been entirely personal or parochial—the names of Whig and Tory having nothing to do with them.

But Cobden's banner of incorporation, it was said, was as the red rag that fired the Tory bull. The Municipal Act of 1835 had been the work of Whigs and Reformers, and everywhere they had led the way in the local changes it had wrought. Thus the battle of incorporation at Manchester became at once a political battle on the surface, and the inference was drawn that if politics had been allowed to slumber in the town's administration previously, the repose had been conditional upon Tory ascendency being unchallenged. But in every political contest in the town, from 1832 onwards, the Whigs and Reformers (on the £10 suffrage) had gained the day; and it was now shown that they were the stronger also in municipal contests, if those were made political.

The later phases of the struggle, however, made it hard to say which looked the more ludicrous in retrospect—the affectation of Tory or Radical principles at stake, or the real party enthusiasm that had been enlisted in their name. Now that all was reduced to a question of compensation to individuals, the drop from "patriotism" to "pay" was too much like the change from artificial splendour in the skies to a drizzle of spent rockets.

Not that there was any immediate retrenchment of spectacular effect. Talk of moving heaven and earth! both Houses of Parliament were moved for Mr. Milne. But the great Duke of Wellington in the Lords, and

Mr. Wilson Patten* in the Commons, were alike unsuccessful in their advocacy. The ground of it was the diversion of fees and income which the establishment of the corporation and the borough sessions must inevitably have caused.

The Municipal Reform Act had not only embraced the principle of compensation for such losses, but in the eyes of strict economists had carried it too far. The Act, however, did not go beyond providing for public officials who were dispossessed, and the usual answer to Mr. Milne's claims was that he was in no such position. He had been deprived of none of his posts, and though the fees attached to them had been largely diverted, those which remained were lucrative still. It was argued that any publican on an old coach-road whose receipts suffered through the railways must have had as good a claim on the public as Mr. Milne's. The ratepayers of Manchester thought they owed him nothing, and when compensation clauses were introduced into a "Criminal Justice Bill," the opposition was not confined to the town council, but was expressed by meetings all over the borough.

Mr. Milne's own language against the corporation and its promoters had been disrespectful from the beginning, and now he became the subject of plain-speaking in his turn. It was by Mr. Milne's advice, it was said, that the old authorities had kept the police in their hands, levied rates for it, and wasted thousands of the public money. "For twenty-nine

* The Lord Winmarleigh of later years.

years Mr. Milne had been receiving in fees three times the amount of the stipendiary magistrate's salary." Alderman Kay said the Bill under discussion, if passed, should be entitled "An Act for the Better Relief of the Fully Employed Rich." Alderman Callender* recalled a saying of Mr. Cresswell at the Rutter trial, that "incorporation would prove a perpetual blister to the town;" but "it now appeared that Mr. Milne might be christened Cantharides, or the Blister Fly." Alderman Hopkins remembered that when the Act appointing a stipendiary magistrate for Manchester was passed, early in the century, a proposal (in the Milne interest) to make the office of clerk to the magistrates an appointment for life was defeated. The magistrates had always remained free to appoint whom they pleased.

But Mr. Milne held the clerkship of the police commissioners also. And now the pro-corporate majority in that body, looking forward to the nearer prospect of a transference of its functions to the corporation, wished to guard against a life-appointment and its consequent claims being established in regard to that office as well. It was discovered that they did not want a law clerk at all; they wanted a clerk, and when they wanted law they could call in a lawyer. By a majority of 99 to 65 they voted the clerkship vacant. Then the Radical leaders followed the Tories out of the room. It had been said that Mr. Milne would still be accepted as a candidate for the office in

* Father of a subsequent M.P. for Manchester.

future. But Mr. Milne would do nothing to prejudice his claims to compensation. As long as he had a shilling in the world, he declared, he would maintain them.

Alderman Cobden took no part in the debates on this head. Whatever his opinions about it, the public expression of them went no further than those allusions, which have been noticed in speeches of previous years.

It was now the end of August, 1841; the General Election of that year had taken place, and Mr. Cobden had been elected M.P. for Stockport.

A change of Government, and of majorities, from Whig to Tory, made Parliament no more pliable to compensation schemes. It did not prevent the passing of an Act, in 1842, confirming the incorporation of Manchester, nor of subsequent Acts by which the corporation became not only the paramount but the sole civic executive; the powers of the police commission, the gas directors, and the town improvement committee passing into their possession, and the manorial rights becoming theirs by purchase.

The altered circumstances brought dramatic changes in the attitude of the claimants for compensation. Mr. Oswald Milne and Mr. Rutter, in turn, made personal appearances before the town council, sitting in the town hall, of which they, in place of Mr. Milne's old clients, were now the unquestioned masters. Each was catechised on oath as to the particulars of his claims.

Mr. Milne had computed the amount due to him to be £34,724. Mr. Harper claimed, as clerk of the peace for the county, above £19,000. Mr. Rutter's claim was some



The late SIR JOSEPH HERON, Town Clerk of Manchester.

(*From a Bust in the Manchester Town Hall.*)

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smaller number of thousands, or an annuity of £334. The total gross amount of these claims was £60,282 : 8*s*. 4½*d*.

The personal treatment of the claimants at these interviews was studiously respectful and polite. Nothing could well have surpassed either the gentlemanly patience or the professional astuteness with which the Town Clerk (Mr. Heron) performed his exacting part of inquisitor-depute, confirming at the same time his reputation for saving immense sums to his employers.

Mr. Milne's demeanour, as one sees it only in the printed reports of question and answer, appears that of a way-worn Gulliver, rather surprised to find himself so civil towards the pretensions of the senate of Lilliput.

Mr. Milne was then an elderly, portly, rather burly man, about five feet ten; what Burns calls "a buirdly chiel" in appearance, with a fine forehead and a determined mouth. Standing there (for he declined to sit) a picture of somewhat rough and decaying force, he and the elegant-looking, accomplished cross-examiner, typified the old and new order of things sufficiently well in their own persons.*

Preliminaries over, the tall, slim, glossy and raven-locked town clerk—young, handsome, dandified, courteous, but perfect master of his business—at once probes his subject with the question—"At what date, Mr. Milne, were you appointed clerk to the magistrates of the Manchester Division?" Mr. Milne, in reply, has quite a fund of autobiography to communicate. He tells how

* Accompanying this page is a copy of a bust of Sir Joseph Heron (taken in later life) in the Manchester Town Hall.

he and his father, in their business as lawyers and law clerks, arranged things between them in his early days, more than thirty years ago. There seems a shade of regret for some long lost opportunity, or long past mistake in life, as the old gentleman recollects how by choice or persuasion he got into the position he then took, "or else (he concludes) I should not have been here to-day." All this without a word or sign of interruption, and then the town clerk quietly repeats the question, precisely as before. Mr. Milne rambles off again, and the town clerk continues to pin him. But nothing more definite is obtainable than that every county magistrate appointed for a generation past had found it convenient to call and commit himself to the hands of Mr. Milne. Had the collective bench met specially to give him a public post, it could not have been, in his own eyes, better established.

Three weeks later, on the 10th May, 1843, the council resolved unanimously, "That Mr. Oswald Milne is not entitled to compensation out of the borough fund."

This view was eventually upheld in the law courts, but it was long in doing. Mr. Milne's action against the corporation came on at Liverpool Assizes, August, 1844. The array of counsel was (again to quote Alderman Kay) proportionate to the magnitude of the issue. The claimant's leader was Thesiger (afterwards Lord Chancellor Chelmsford); the corporation leader, Fitzroy Kelly (afterwards Lord Chief Baron). The judge was Cresswell, who, five years before, had held the leading brief against the corpo-

ration in the Rutter case. His lordship directed the jury to return a general verdict for the Crown, in Mr. Milne's favour. But the case went then to the higher courts, and there the litigation was still protracted.

In successive pleadings before the judges, the claim was gradually whittled away, and by about the year 1848, or ten years from the beginning of Mr. Cobden's exertions for local reform, the case of *Milne* v. *The Corporation* disappeared entirely. The first portions of the claim to be dismissed were those founded upon loss of fees and emoluments as clerk to the commissioners of police; and as prosecuting attorney and clerk to the magistrates acting for the Manchester Division of the county, in as far as those fees and emoluments were derived from the business of "the townships comprised within the limits of the borough." (The business of other parts of the division would remain attached to Mr. Milne's office, at least till time brought further changes than that of the incorporation of Manchester.) Thus about £20,000 of the claim was disposed of at a stroke. In the end, also, the judges decided that Mr. Milne had no claim upon the borough for the £14,000 and upwards, which represented loss of fees and emoluments as clerk to the stipendiary magistrate acting within the townships of Manchester and Salford.

The cases of Mr. Rutter and Mr. Harper were on another footing. It was all along admitted that Mr. Rutter had a substantial claim, though the amount of it was disputed. It was at length commuted into an annuity of £277, or about £100 more than the corporation had agreed to; the

sum being finally arrived at by appeal to the Treasury. But, in respect of Mr. Harper's claim, as clerk of the peace, of a gross sum of £19,000, or annuity in proportion, the Treasury confirmed the corporation's estimate of its liability to him as represented by a payment of only six pounds eight shillings per annum.

Thus, then, those soaring, flaming "rockets" of the opposition, after somewhat slow decline, ultimately fizzled out.

Cobden's office of alderman was nominally retained for its entire term of six years. But if the record of the late Mr. Simpson, of Mottram, in his "Annals of the Manchester Council," may be trusted, Alderman Cobden's attendance was limited, in the concluding year, to one meeting only, and in the two previous years he attended not at all. It was in 1842, while Cobden was an absentee, that the council was at length able to order repayment to him and Alderman Neild of the net sum they had themselves spent in procuring the incorporation, £1,700 odd, without any interest added.

Naturally, there was no thought of renewing connexion with the Manchester Town Council. Like his fellow-incorporator, George Wilson, whose chairmanship of the League had obliged him to relinquish town-councillorship long before, Mr. Cobden was too much engaged in the Anti-Corn Law campaigns to have time for local business any more.

He could never be quite indifferent to local concerns, because (again to quote Mr. Morley) larger matters "never

at any time in his life dulled his interest in the need that lay close to his hand." But, after truly heroic labour for a couple of years in giving Manchester its local self-government, and in seeing it through the early trials of a new existence, it was to those higher and wider flights of politics with which he had begun, that "Alderman Cobden" immediately returned.

Almost his last appearance in the town council would be as far back as April, 1841, when he exerted himself—but this time in vain, for many seemed to absent themselves from the vote—to qualify the terms of welcome to be given by the corporation to "Commodore Napier"—the gallant Sir Charles—on his return to England from the operations at Acre. Cobden was willing enough, apparently, to applaud a hero, but he questioned the foreign policy on which the heroism had been expended, and would have had Manchester seize the occasion to say a word for "non-intervention." But it was not to be.

And the work that became such a man as Cobden in a town council may be said to have already ended. One cannot leave the consideration of it without thinking of the contrast which, traceable to his impulse, the Manchester of to-day presents with that in which he laboured. It is not merely that the departments, as well as the province, of municipal work have extended. Manchester, in almost every material, moral, and metropolitan sense which the name can assume, owes much to the line Mr. Cobden took in national affairs.

How much the town is Cobden's debtor for its local

institutions few who pass his statue in St. Ann's Square are likely to have in mind. Without Cobden, doubtless, Manchester could not have been without its municipal freedom much longer. Imagination refuses to picture the absurdity of the giant continuing always in the leading-strings of infancy. As a matter of fact, the incorporation of Manchester had been mooted even before the Municipal Reform Act, and before Cobden's "letters" and unreported "first speech" on the subject. Lord Brougham's name is connected with the proposal of some special enactment for the purpose. But, after all this, it was only by Cobden's determined effort that the thing was actually done.

The slightest review of the opposition at that time attending the measure must show, further, how unlikely it is that the general body of its promoters, numerous and zealous though they were, if they had lacked the driving force of such a man as Cobden, could have got the thing done when it was.

But the contrast of past and present invites notice from another point of view.

Some one lately published in the *Manchester City News* a notice of the celebrated De Tocqueville's impressions of Manchester during a visit in 1835. As translated, a part of them reads as follows :—

"On this watery plain, which nature and art have contributed to irrigate, are thrown, as if at hazard, palaces and cottages. Everything in the outer appearance of the city attests the individual power of man, nothing the regulating

power of society. Human liberty reveals at each step its capricious creative force: nowhere is apparent the slow and continuous effort of government. . . . At the top of the hillocks which I am attempting to describe, thirty or forty manufactories lift their heads: their six storeys rise in the air, and their immense circumference announces from afar the centralization of industry. Around them have been scattered at will the wretched habitations of the poor. They are reached by a multitude of little tortuous paths. Between them extends uncultivated ground which has lost the charm of country life, but is yet without the advantages of the town. The land there is already disturbed and torn up in a thousand places, but is not yet covered by the dwellings of man. And the streets which connect these badly-joined portions of the great city present, as everything does, the example of a hasty and incomplete work—the effort of a great population to press on to gain—to amass gold—to have everything at a single stroke, and meanwhile to scorn the pleasures and the comforts of life."

The local memory that can reach from fifty to sixty years back must recognize enough of truth in this and other passages of a very vivid picture, to account for some of the troubles that have baffled sanitary and social reformers since. It also shows how different was the abnormal growth of Manchester from the more regular and gradual growth of towns under different industrial conditions. Such as Manchester then was, from the cause assigned, her debt was great, as Mr. Cobden owned, to

local leaders who made the best of things under a rule which the man of more modern ideas could only treat as obsolete.

The longest memory will soon be too short to revive the picture of the town and times as Cobden knew them when he began his public work. Central, or mercantile, Manchester had but half shaken off the reign of gloom and darkness, in narrow lanes or blind alleys, to which the elders of the local commerce had clung with a prejudice akin to that of Cobden's uncle, and first employer, against his nephew's love of "book-knowledge." Near the Exchange, Market Street was almost the sole thoroughfare wider than a dozen steps from wall to wall. Others that now give light and space in that vicinity were hardly dreamed of; they had certainly no existence. For readers of to-day, the topography of the local post-office debates, before mentioned, must be a hopeless puzzle. Where is Ducie Place? Or Barnes Street? Or Crow Alley? All lay within the area which the Exchange now covers. They are gone, therefore, like the more modern Exchange Arcade, and historic Newall's Buildings, the home of the League. The growth of the Exchange has obliterated all.

Local memory, in a dreamy mood, might indulge the fancy that above the daily crowd at High 'Change, yet within the lofty room and beneath its roof, somewhere near the north-east angle, some chamber of the upper air is haunted by the shades of nearly all the figures in Herbert's picture, a ghostly congregation above the living multitude of the market.*

* See page 101.

But this is not a place to dwell on phantasies. Enough to add, that the birth of the Manchester municipality was brought about in a time without telegraphs or cheap postage, almost without railways; when commerce and industry were in shackles, the people starved or stormed; and half the conveniences of life, of education, and of recreation, familiar now, were still unknown. And it is only when the clock is thus turned back on the mental stage, and the lights thus lowered, that we are able (in stage phrase) to "discover" the conditions in which Cobden's or any kindred spirit of the past yearned and strove for better times.

MR. COBDEN AND MY FATHER.

Mr. Cobden had not been long a resident in Manchester before he and my father—Absalom Watkin—became closely acquainted; and that acquaintance continued, with more or less agreement on political affairs, till my father's death in December, 1861. They had literary tastes in common. They were both self-educated men, in the sense that neither had had the advantages of a high school or an university. Each had habitually "burnt his midnight oil," after long hours of daily labour. They both loved books and loved their libraries, and to a great extent they shared the same merciful and sympathising human instincts. They loved the poor and the oppressed. They claimed no credit for that; they knew they could not even help it, and their sense of human duty—the better words are, of Christian duty—forced them to devote themselves in all ways, and always, to the great cause of world-mending. They were both truly Christians — men who read, who believed in, and who practised the principles of the Sermon on the



ABSALOM WATKIN. Born 1787; Died 1861.

(*From a Painting by William Bradley.*)

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Mount. It might be—I think it was—that my father believed with less inquiry, and Mr. Cobden with more. But if Heaven is a matter of stages, no two Christians will be found in higher places in the Heavenly rest.

My father was a frequent guest at the big old house in Quay Street,* whereat literary, political, and fine-art subjects were discussed at Mr. Cobden's table; and I fancy a great deal of good to the intellectual, as well as the business, life arose from these social meetings. Mr. Cobden was, as my father had been, almost from youth upward, a member of the Literary Society which met, and I think meets still, for purposes of debate, at the back of the famous "Cross Street Chapel"—an edifice famous for services to the emancipation of our people from old Tory tyrannies and ignorance. As I write, I can see Mr. Cobden's figure and hear his voice in the debates of the society, of which I was then a member; and I can recall a "Ladies' Night" on which Mrs. Cobden, a Welsh lady, then beaming with the beauty of youth, was introduced and welcomed to the assembly.

Some years earlier, after a great meeting in the old Manchester Theatre, in October, 1837, to hear Mr. Wyse, M.P., and others, to further national education—a meeting connected with a movement originated by Mr. Cobden†—my father received the following letter, which I print

* Afterwards the first home of the Owens College.

† The Manchester "Society for Promoting National Education," was the name of the association which thus endeavoured to create an interest in the subject ten years before the "Lancashire Public Schools Association" began its memorable efforts in the same cause.

rather to show the minute and thorough labour bestowed by Mr. Cobden on everything he undertook:—

"MANCHESTER,
"*31st October*, 1837.

"My dear Sir,

"We are preparing, in a pamphlet form, a report of the speeches of Thursday last. As yours was so imperfectly heard owing to the noise (and the noise was, humanely speaking, unavoidable, after the physical exertion of sitting for two hours without moving whilst Mr. Wyse was preceding you), I think you would prefer to correct it by writing it out again for the printer, and if you will do so, the Committee will be much obliged. Mr. Wyse will also correct his speech.

"Yours very truly,
"RICHD COBDEN.

"A. WATKIN, ESQ."

Another letter to my father is connected with the beginnings of the League. The precursor society—the Anti-Corn Law Association—was originated after a reception given to Dr. Bowring at the York Hotel, Manchester, on the 10th September, 1838; and my father, who was placed on the committee, was associated with Mr. Cobden and others in preparing the first address issued to the public. Hence the following letter:—

"MOSLEY STREET,
"*3rd December*, 1838.

"My dear Sir,

"I presume the honorary secretary has informed you that you have been appointed one of a sub-committee

to draw up an address upon the nature and objects of the Anti-Corn Law Association; Mr. Smith* and Mr. Prentice, together with your humble servant, being your colleagues. Ever since I received the notice I have been like a certain personage spoken of in Job, going to and fro, and have not had leisure to call on you or others upon the subject. But I find that an adjourned meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday evening to receive the report, and just as yesterday I got the notice of this, I was visited with an adjourned attack from inflammation of the eyes, which precludes my writing more than this explanation. I hope to have an opportunity of speaking to you upon the subject to-morrow; meantime

"I remain, yours very truly,

"RICH^{D} COBDEN.

"ABSALOM WATKIN, ESQ.

"P.S.—I heard a hint that you were going to oppose the opening of the Zoological Gardens on Sundays.† Before you bring your judgment to a verdict upon this subject (one of the most important that can be discussed), I should like to give you a few facts connected with the observance of the Sunday abroad. I don't mean to refer to Catholic States, but to Prussia, Saxony, Switzerland, &c. May we

* The late John Benjamin Smith, M.P.

† The gardens here in question were on the site of the present Greek Church in Higher Broughton. Opened at the end of May, 1838, they were closed some four years afterwards, a good example of the failure of joint stock enterprise in a field where the more effective private management of the proprietors of "Belle Vue," in later days, achieved success.

not be possibly wrong, and they right? At least let us judge by the fruits."

My father was associated with the League from its birth to its triumph, and spoke, wrote, and worked admirably in the cause. He was, however, a man who, prompted by his convictions, did his work and never cared for credit or applause. His work was his reward.

The "address" above mentioned was an able and eloquent exposition of the principles of the new agitation against the Corn Laws. There are parts of it in which it is not difficult to trace the several hands of its four authors. The whole is too long to be here reproduced, but a brief summary may be permitted. The manifesto set out with a disclaimer of any appeal to exclusive political parties. It drew attention to the fact that a tax of fifteen millions sterling a year was levied on the people's food for the sole benefit of landowners, though our most powerful minister—Pitt—had never ventured to tax it for the purposes of the State. The community of interest of the agricultural and manufacturing population was argued upon economical grounds, and likewise the dependence of national and imperial interests on the welfare of our foreign trade. The effects of foreign commercial rivalry with it were shown in many different quarters, and Corn Law repeal was advocated in order to place our industrious artizans on a level with foreign competitors. At the same time (the address went on):—

"We do not join in opinion with those who predict that such a measure would reduce the price of our corn to its present cost abroad. All that we contend for as indispensable to the preservation of our foreign commerce is that the prices be equalized. And whether that be effected through a fall in the cost of food here, or, as we maintain, owing to a rise in the prices abroad, similar to that which took place in foreign wools, linseed, fruits, and other articles, consequent upon the reduction of import duties in this country, our object will be equally attained.

"But besides the advantage of relief to our artizans in their competition with foreign manufacturers for the possession of neutral markets, the repeal of our Corn Law would simultaneously open up markets in those very countries where the most severe competition is at present to be found."

Still guarding against over-estimates of the benefits of Free Trade, and repudiating all idea of privilege for the manufacturing class at the expense of others, these emphatic words were added :—

"Far from holding out the delusive prospect of advantages not purchased by the toil and industry of the people, we boldly tell our industrious countrymen that labour is the price at which every earthly boon must be purchased; and all that we seek in their behalf is that freedom which shall secure to them a recompense, great or small, in proportion to the extent of their exertions."

A passage anticipating some reversal of the factory

system is one which experience has shown to be a little too idyllic:—

"With a free, untaxed trade in corn, the muslin, gingham, and calico weaver may again ply his industry at home, amidst his own happy and contented family."

The address wound up with appeals for aid against the Bread Tax from all philanthropists, advocates of education, and friends of peace. In one sentence was the reminder that "the cravings of hunger must be satisfied before even religion itself can exercise its holy influence;" and in another, that "the Author of our faith has commanded us, before praying for spiritual gifts, before asking the forgiveness of our trespasses, to supplicate for a supply of 'our daily bread.'"

These words are all but identical with part of Cobden's letter in 1841 (see Mr. Morley's ninth chapter), declining a clergyman's invitation to subscribe for "ten new churches" in Manchester until the expense of overthrowing legal obstacles to the feeding of the hungry should have ceased.

I have just found two notes of Mr. Cobden's to myself, a portion of one and the whole of the other, which I think I must here transcribe. Both were written after his passing from Manchester to London from his visit to the United States, on the business of the Illinois Central Railway, the affairs of which had given him anxiety.

The first note refers to the wholly unexpected invitation from Lord Palmerston to join the Cabinet, which was

handed to Cobden on his landing at Liverpool from America:—

"LONDON,

"*1st July*, 1859.

"My dear Watkin,

"Let me thank you heartily for your kind welcome, and for the substantial compliment you were so good as to offer me. I am afraid my decision respecting the offer of Office has offended some of my friends, but I could not take any other course. It will be seen by-and-by that I was right. I saw P. to-day, and in the same amicable spirit in which he made the proposal I declined his offer; but as Gibson is in, I shall, I hope, be able to give quite as good support to the Government as though I were one of them. I hope you are coming in.*

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN."

The second recalls to my mind a long interview, three months before, at the office of Mr. Sale, the solicitor, in Princess Street, in Manchester, when we met to talk over the troubles of a good friend, who had made great sacrifices for the good cause—difficulties soon afterwards put right—and finished our conversation with France and

* This refers to my (unsuccessful) candidature for Yarmouth, after I had declined an invitation to stand for Salford.

trade. Everyone knows what followed in the great work of the French treaty (of which more hereafter):—

"LONDON,
3rd October, 1859.

"My dear Watkin,

* * * * *

"When I landed from America I went to London by your line, and was in raptures with the Green Valley, with its busy prosperous villages which met my eye from the Dinting Viaduct, and I felt proud of my country as I passed through the corn fields on the borders of Notts and Lincolnshire, where the crops were nearly double the average growth of the farms in the United States.

"I shall be glad if an opportunity should offer for us to meet and talk again on the personal matter,* which has given me many thoughtful and desponding reflections. I hope you did not omit to remember me most kindly to your excellent father; and believe me,

"Yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN."

My dear father had at that time been seized by an attack of paralysis, which gradually increased until his death two years later.

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* Referring to the "good friend" alluded to on the previous page.



STEVENSON SQUARE, MANCHESTER, IN 1891.

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MISERY AND STEVENSON SQUARE.

THE period from 1838 to 1843, and from 1845 to 1848, was a period of misery in the manufacturing districts. A large portion of the hard hand-working people existed, but did not live. I could never forget it. Thus, I followed my father in the agitation for the Repeal of the Food Laws and for Free Trade. I was devoted to the cause, and zealous, if not always discreet. My heart was with the suffering people. And when the Corn-Law repealers found themselves opposed by the Chartists, their purposes libelled, their meetings disturbed, I became at last indignant, and, when patience was exhausted, did my best to bring about the means of protecting free discussion at open public assemblages of our citizens. We who were in a peaceable way advocating the unrestricted importation of food to starving people—that importation leading to more exports, more work, and more wages also—were for a long time described as "Moral Force Whigs," a term in contrast with "Physical Force Chartists."

When we found out that the Duke of Buckingham's "Protection"—or, in other words, "Unjust Rent"—Association* was devoting its funds to ruffling, our indigna-

* Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture was its formal title.

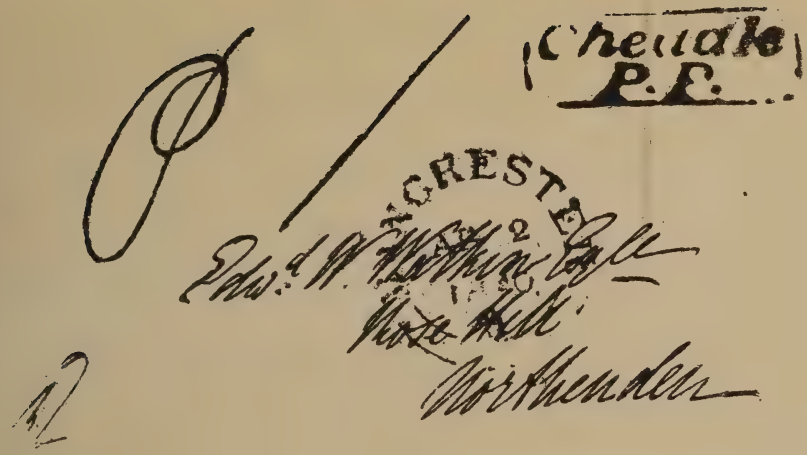
tion grew, and so far as I was concerned, and a good many zealous young men—and others agreed with me and them—we said to ourselves, "What is this physical force which we are, meeting after meeting, submitting to? Why should we not test what it is?" Thus organization began, resistance was made, and after a small body of resolute people had bundled a few hundreds down stairs, or out of doors, without much difficulty, the conclusion was come to that this Chartist physical force was mainly "brag." And at last those with whom I was associated in my capacity of chairman of a working man's association determined to hold, for the first time of daring, an open-air demonstration in Stevenson Square, and to ask the Mayor of Manchester to preside. A requisition, signed by about 6,000 working men, was obtained, and I had the honour, with four others, to present it to the Mayor, Mr. Neild. His worship hesitated, and at last promised an answer next day, when the answer was in the negative. Some asked Mr. Cobden to preside. This was in the spring of 1841, before the fall of the Melbourne ministry, and before the general election at which Mr. Cobden first became M.P.

I will now refer to my diary for details of a remarkable event in the history of free discussion in Manchester.

Here are extracts:—

"*May* 9, 1841.

"We—the Operative Anti-Corn Law-ites of Manchester—have managed to unite the repealers of the Union against the Chartists. Last Wednesday evening the latter called a


Chesilde
P.E.
CRESTED
Edw.d W. Hutchinson Esqr
Hutchinson

Cheadle April

Sir,

I beg to thank you for your letter requesting me to become a member of the Anti Corn Law Association, I feel obliged by your kind expressions of personal respect.

That you are sincere in your conviction of the impolicy of the corn laws, no one who reads your letter can doubt — I trust you will give me credit for equal sincerity when I tell you that I am convinced their Repeal would ruin the middle class of society — & reduce the agricultural laborer to the miserable condition of the continental serf —

Holding these opinions I cannot join your Association — I have the honor to be Sir

Your faithful Servt

E. Trafford Leigh

G. W. Wilkins Esq.

Letter of the Rev. E. Trafford Leigh, *Rector of Cheadle, Cheshire, Apr.* 1840. [p. 69]

meeting to pass a vote of censure upon O'Connell. We sent all our men, and also the repealers, and entirely upset them. The malcontents left in an unusual hurry."

"*May 16th*, 1841.

"Last Monday night we had a lecture against the Corn Laws, delivered on the Green in the open air, at Cheadle, by Finigan. We had an excellent meeting."

I am reminded here of a letter from Mr. Cobden, a year before, relating to the same locality:—

"MANCHESTER,
"*11th May*, 1840.

"Dear Sir,

"Nothing but unavoidable absence upon the Continent could have prevented my accepting the invitation which you have done me the honour to transmit to me for the 20th. I have long watched the exertions of the members of the North Cheshire Anti-Corn Law Association with feelings of sincere gratification.* The field of their labours did not tempt them with the prospect of a speedy triumph; for in few places could they have found a less favourable scene of operations. Their success has, however, again demonstrated how true it is, that no impediments, however great, can long resist the energy and

* I had sent an invitation to the Rector of Cheadle, the Rev. E. Trafford Leigh, to join our North Cheshire Anti-Corn Law Association. I append a *fac simile* of his reply—curiously illustrative of the honest prejudices of his time.

perseverance of Englishmen, when enlisted in a just cause. May your little band go on increasing in numbers and in strength; in zeal and activity it needs no increase! I shall only add, that, wherever I may happen to find myself on the 20th, I shall drink a bumper to the good health of the meeting at the George at Cheadle, and another to the health of that unwearied advocate of repeal, my friend Mr. Prentice; and believe me to be, with sincere respect for the members of your body, ever truly,

"Yours,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"E. W. WATKIN, ESQ."

I return to my diary of May 16th, 1841:—

"On Thursday evening I went to the committee meeting of the O. A. C. L. A.,* and then adjourned to the 'Queen Anne,' in Long Millgate, where we formed an association for No. 3 District.†

"On Tuesday next we have a meeting in the town hall for the purpose of backing ministers.‡ We have to summon our forces to the battle—a stormy one, no doubt, it will be."

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* Operative Anti-Corn Law Association.

† This did not mean No. 3 of the fourteen districts of the old Police Commissioners, but of the districts into which we had mapped the town for our own agitation.

‡ The Melbourne Cabinet was then favouring a fixed duty on corn as a measure of amelioration though not abolition.

"*May* 23.

"On Monday evening last the Chartists held a meeting in Carpenters' Hall for the purpose of continuing McDowall as a member of the Convention* a fortnight longer, and also—but this did not appear in the bills—for that of passing an address to the Chartists of Newry.

"Our associates and the Irish and other repealers of the Union and the Corn Laws mustered in full strength, and we had as pretty a row as I ever witnessed. The Chartists were driven out of the hall four times. We regularly thrashed them and passed our own resolutions.

"On Tuesday we mustered all up for the meeting in the town hall, where we gained another complete victory.

"On Friday a public meeting took place in the town hall, Salford, which we attended, and were *victorious* also.

"On Thursday night there was a tea party in the Corn Exchange, which went off admirably. I was there, but had to leave for near an hour to attend a committee meeting of the O. A. C. L. A. We resolved upon a committee to make arrangements for the public meeting to be held in the race week.

"On Saturday morning we waited upon the League and got all our requests as to the public meeting granted. We are to have plenty of flags, &c., &c."

* The Chartist Convention, that is. Dr. McDowall was a noted man among them, and a very good speaker. He practised as a surgeon in the neighbourhood of Accrington, and his political sympathies seem to have been determined by what he saw of the excesses of the factory system of labour. In the cause of Chartism he suffered imprisonment.

"*May* 30, 1841.

"Last Monday evening I went into No. 1 District, where we formed an association.

"On Tuesday evening I went into No. 3, where we had a spirited meeting.

"On Wednesday evening down into Salford, and then up to Kennedy's, in Cable Street (Manchester).

"On Friday evening at the Carpenters' Hall—a meeting of Requisitionists—near 2,000 there. I spoke, and we agreed that we should hold a meeting in the open air next Wednesday morning at 11.

"During the week I have been uncommonly busy as a member of the meeting and procession committee. The procession we hope to be a great affair.

"Our requisition of the working classes to the mayor was signed by 5,690—it was completed on Wednesday afternoon, 27th May, and five of us went over with it. The mayor opened his eyes when he saw it, but, after humming and hawing, he declined to give an answer until Friday. On Friday morning we received his reply—politely declining to call the meeting.

"The Chartists threaten to give O'Connell, who is coming to Manchester on Tuesday morning, a 'welcome.' I hope they will not attempt it, as, if they do, blood will be shed. *Nous verrons.* They also talk of opposing us on Wednesday next."

"*Saturday, June* 5.

"On Monday evening last I went into Salford, and spoke to the Salford repealers on the necessity of backing our movement on the following Wednesday. I afterwards went to Kennedy's, in Cable Street (Manchester), on the same errand.

"On Tuesday morning I went to the Mosley Arms to see O'Connell, and afterwards went to a meeting which he addressed in the fields* behind Carpenters' Hall. In the evening I went to a dinner, in the hall, in honour of the 'Liberator.'

"On Wednesday morning I was up before six, and went immediately to Newall's Buildings. I found Howie sending off the flags to the various districts. I went thence to Stevenson Square, where the hustings for the meeting

* Fields since built over with the factories and cottages near the Medlock bank. Readers who know the locality may ask why it was that Manchester politicians were so used to debates and riots in Carpenters' Hall, then a suburban situation, and where the tide of politics no longer flows. The answer is, that Carpenters' Hall, close to the Medlock, was then a new erection, popular as the property of a trade-union, containing one of the largest rooms then to be had—one of the cheapest also (the charge was but a guinea per night)—and, what is more noteworthy still, the best Manchester meeting-room for *hearing*, till the Free Trade Hall came into being. Both the present Free Trade Hall and its chief predecessor of the League days have been remarkable in that respect. The curious in the matter may now visit the main room of the Manchester Free Reference Library, bear in mind that its central portion was the public meeting-room of the Town Hall of former days, and be assured that the voices of most speakers got lost in the glazed dome of the roof. But in this, as in so many other things, Mr. Cobden took advantage: he was always careful to *speak down* to the ears of an audience, not to soar in the space overhead.

were part erected. A few of the Chartists were there even at that early hour, and cheek by jowl with the hustings was a machine for the accommodation of the Chartist orators. I went from the square to Kennedy's, in Cable Street, and thence to Timothy Mulhearn's. At this man's house I found about a score of 'boys' all ready for 'work.' These men were ostensibly 'flag-bearers,' but by their being ornamented with good blackthorn sticks it was clear they understood the real meaning of their office—viz., that of A.-C. L.* police.

"I took these men with me to the square, and we rather astonished the Chartists, who had increased somewhat in numbers by this time, with our appearance.

"I got my horse, and we went back to Kennedy's, where our band assembled. After some preliminary preparations we marched up Oldham Road, down Livesey Street and George's Road,† to the 'Queen Anne,' in Long Millgate. Here we took in tow the procession forming there, and went all together to Stevenson Square. We got there at a quarter to ten. The place was nearly filled with people. The Ardwick, Hulme, Salford No. 1, Newton and Failsworth, and Ratcliffe detachments had arrived, and were either in the square or in Lever Street and Hilton Street. We found it would be impossible to form the procession as we had intended, and we resolved to hold our meeting first. I rode about and got as many of our friends as possible to

* Anti-Corn Law.

† St. George's Road, the present Rochdale Road.

get in front of the hustings. I also got the principal part of the flags either reared against the walls of the church* on one side, or Robertson's mill on the other, or else furled and tied to the pillars of the hustings. By this time Dr. Sleigh and his son, with Charles Wilkins,† were come, and all the Chartist leaders were arrived. The police had taken possession of the Chartist hustings, much to the mortification of the 'Convention,' all the members of which, we were told, were on the ground.

"At half-past ten I went on the hustings. Almost immediately after a body of Chartists from the country, carrying two banners, one of which had inscribed on it, 'No new poor law,' and the other, 'Down with the Whigs,' made their appearance, and began to advance to the front, pushing our friends to the right and left. This was submitted to pretty quietly, but at last from the violent conduct of the parties, and from the view of the hustings being partly hidden by the flags, an attempt was made to pull them down. This was immediately resisted, and the Chartists showed their preparation for a row by drawing forth short staves, with which they began to lay about them. Our Irish friends, made desperate by seeing this, and particularly by the brutal conduct of a fellow who nearly killed a poor man with a blow from an iron bar, rushed at the flags, tore them down, broke the shafts in

* St. Clement's, then in the Square, but afterwards removed.

† Dr. Sleigh was a noted Irish barrister and Orangeman of the period. Charles Wilkins was the still more noted actor-barrister, Whig-Tory agent, and eventual Serjeant-at-Law.

pieces, and laid about them to such good effect as to drive the Chartists out of the square, leaving a kind of lane about four yards wide, next the church, and reaching down as far as Lever Street. At this moment a kind of desire manifested itself on the part of the men immediately in front of the hustings to join the affray. Seeing this, I jumped on the hustings rail, and pulling off my hat, said—'Englishmen and Irishmen—many of you know me—you know that I am a repealer of the Union, and also a repealer of the Corn Laws. As your friend, and the unflinching supporter of the rights of the labouring millions, I call upon you to keep the peace. As you wish to see carried out the measures you are here to support, and as you value freedom for your country, remain perfectly quiet, and do not be provoked to leave your places by the conduct of men who, I believe, are hired to come here and disturb the meeting. Will you keep the peace? There.' 'Yes; yes,' resounded from all parts. 'Well, then,' I continued, 'all of you who are determined to do so, hold up your hands.' At least three thousand hands were immediately held up. I then called for three cheers, which were given, and I then retired. On leaving the front of the hustings, I was thanked by John Brooks, Sir Thos. Potter, and others, for having, to use their words, 'preserved the meeting.' At precisely eleven, I rose and proposed Cobden as chairman. McGowan seconded him, and he was carried by ten to one. The Chartists, who had returned in part, voted against us, and made a slight noise, which was drowned in the cheers of the rest of the meeting.

"Cobden briefly opened the proceedings, and then called upon Warren to move the first resolution. Warren not being on the hustings, I was compelled to step forward and do it myself. As the spooney had the copy of the protest we intended to submit in his pocket, and as I had no copy, I was obliged to move a resolution which we never intended to put—'That in the opinion of this meeting, the Corn Laws are unchristian, impolitic, and unjust.' J. Daly seconded it. In moving it, I took care to pitch into Wilkins, about his political harlequinism, thus in some measure preparing him for a warm reception from the meeting. When the motion had been duly moved and seconded, Dr. Sleigh, Bairstow, Connor, and others, wanted to speak. After some little interruption, Dr. Sleigh was allowed to speak. He was heard with great patience so long as he stuck to professions of regard for the working classes, but as soon as he told them the Corn Laws benefited them, his voice was drowned in uproar, and he was not allowed to go on. At last he sat down, and the motion was put and carried, with twenty or thirty dissentients, out of a meeting of perhaps thirty thousand. Warren, who had just arrived, moved the protest. Finnigan seconded it, and it passed, with five dissentients. McGowan* and Ridings then moved and seconded the adjournment of the meeting until the effect of the protest on the votes of the Houses was seen

* When Dr. Sleigh, in the height of tumult, exclaimed, "Irishmen, hear me, *I* am an Irishman!" McGowan retorted, "So was Castle-r-a-a-y!" with prodigious effect.

This was carried unanimously. The Rev. Daniel Hearne then moved Cobden out of the chair, and a vote of thanks was given to C., who ably responded. We then formed in procession, and marched to the New Cross, down Oldham Street, Market Street, over Victoria Bridge, Chapel Street, over New Bailey Bridge, up Bridge Street, King Street, Mosley Street, down Oxford Road, Rusholme Road, round Ardwick Green, down London Road, Piccadilly, Market Street, into St. Ann's Square—where we paused, and after sundry cheers for total repeal, the Queen, &c., &c., we separated. Thus ended one of the finest days' work Manchester ever saw."

This is the true story of how physical force was knocked on the head in the interests of a free platform and the peace of the country.

One incident I cannot forget. When my part was performed, I left the platform to see that all was prepared in the event of another attack of the enemy. The wounded of the attacking party were being taken to the infirmary close by. One big, shock-headed, dirty fellow—I really believe it was the fellow who used the iron bar when the meeting was attacked by the Chartists—was being carried away. His head was certainly well broken, and he kept muttering, "Oh! —— these 'moral force Whigs!' —— these 'moral force Whigs.'"

The epithet "moral force Whig" went out of fashion. We were young and zealous then.

The following interesting and instructive letters to me from Mr. Cobden belong to the same period of embroilment

of Corn Law Repealers, Union Repealers, and Feargus O'Connorite Chartists:—

"LONDON,
"*September*, 1841.

"Dear Watkin,

"Hand this letter over to Hickin* at the League when you have read it. I hope the men of Manchester will shew as much good sense as those of Birmingham have done. I was called upon to-day by a person who wanted to persuade me to attend at a meeting of Chartists (Lovett of the number), for the purpose of organizing a new body separated from Feargus. The latter is very, very low here, and I doubt if he will ever attempt to make a metropolitan party again.

"Yours very truly,
"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"*Private.*] "LEAMINGTON,
"*9th October*, 1841.

"My dear Watkin,

"It will not be possible for me to attend on Monday at your meeting. I am very glad to learn that T. P. Thompson† is to be amongst you: God knows the people want some such a leader; for when I hear of O'Connor going about to preach up Corn Laws, and calling himself a leader of the working class, I think the people have reached the lowest

* The late Mr. Joseph Hickin, Secretary to the League.
† Colonel Thompson, the veteran Anti-Corn Law agitator.

point to which their worst enemies in the ranks of our misgoverning aristocracy would wish to degrade them. I wonder that Cobbett, Cartwright, and Hunt do not rise from their graves to scare such false prophets from the scene of their former more useful and consistent labours. Without wishing to make a charge against any individual without proof, I must express my conviction that the pretended Chartist leaders, both in London and the country, are largely bribed by the Tory aristocracy.

"The game is somewhat changed now from the tactics which prevailed twenty years ago. *Then* the Tories sent hired spies, such as Edwards, amongst the people, to lead them into treasonable courses. The plan now is to hire scoundrels to mislead their victims, by getting them on a *false scent.* The purpose is served in the same manner, viz., the separating the working class from the only friends that can help them, *the rational radicals of the middle class.* How to meet and counteract the work of these wolves in sheeps' clothing is the difficulty.

"You and your little band are doing wonders by keeping alive the Anti-Corn Law agitation, but the political leadership must be wrested from the hands of the hired tools of the Duke of Buckingham.

"I have sometimes thought it would be a good step to start another universal suffrage newspaper, either in London or Manchester, advocating democratic principles, in the way of the *Weekly Dispatch*, but deprecating the insane course of those who oppose the Corn Law repealers. Could such a paper be supported, think you? Would

Hetherington and Lovett and their party in London, Collins in Birmingham, and your party in Manchester, be able to agree upon a paper of this kind? I am, in general, very mistrustful of newspaper undertakings, and would not like to advise any such step; therefore, take my suggestion merely for consideration. The *Northern Star** is fairly open to attacks from such a paper, for its silly exaggerations, its unmeaning and purposeless articles, and its exclusive idolatry of one vain and injudicious man. But the working class want a leader of character and firmness. What think you of Sharman Crawford, a man as honest as day and unswerving as a rock? Or Colonel Thompson, who has many qualities that befit him for a popular champion? You alluded to *me* in a former letter as a leader of the masses, but I know my own qualifications, and they are not such as are required. I have not the physical force, and the tone of my mind is opposed to such an undertaking. I know exactly my own field of usefulness—it lies in the advocacy of practical questions, apart from mere questions of theoretical reforms. My exertions are calculated to bring out the middle class, and that will pave the way for a junction with the masses, if they can be brought to act under a rational and honest leader.

"Let this be private. Excuse haste.

"Yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"MR. E. WATKIN."

* Feargus O'Connor's organ.

"*Private.*] "LEAMINGTON,
"*24th October*, 1841.

"My dear Sir,

"I was much interested in the account you sent me of your Conciliatory Meeting.

"There is one danger to be apprehended from this kind of fraternisation with the Chartists. They will probably try to put it forth as an agreement between the two parties, to incorporate our question with their five points. The *Feargusites* are in a very low way, and would be willing to take any party into partnership that would be likely to help their sinking cause. But they have nothing to offer in exchange, no organisation, no members, no pecuniary resources, no moral influence. We must not, then, think of entering into partnership with such a party. It would be giving up everything in exchange for nothing. The Chartist leaders have not even a knowledge of our question, how then can they advocate it? O'Connor evidently knows nothing about it: if we give him credit for honesty and sincerity, he is the most ignorant man in England on the subject of the Corn Laws. His satellites shine with his borrowed effulgence, in the persons of Leach, Richardson, Doyle & Co.! On the other hand, if we try the leaders of the 'new move' Chartists, we shall find them just as ignorant of our question. Vincent confessed how little he knew about it when he declined to meet Finnigan, and the audience seemed to appreciate it properly. A few days ago I called upon Collins with Mr. Sturge, and I found him in company with O'Neill and Hill. Collins talked the old stuff about reduction of wages, whilst

the other two seemed to have some mysterious plan of currency, about which, however, the *three* could not agree. They did not understand the real bearings of the Corn Law, either upon the interests of the aristocracy or the people. Under such circumstances I was not surprised to find that they would not assist in the repealing the Corn Law; and they will, I expect, be as willing to put aside an Anti-Corn Law meeting, and turn it into a Charter one, as any of the physical force men whom they affect to repudiate. The ignorance of the Chartist leaders is the best apology for their conduct. I would not willingly think so bad of them as to believe that if they understood the nature of the Corn Law, they would help to perpetuate it. But what have *we* to gain by a junction with a party possessing neither numbers nor organization—money nor influence—and to crown all, destitute of even intelligent leaders? We must not allow it to go forth that the Anti-Corn Law party is formally allied to such a body.

"Let me suggest to you to try to carry a resolution expressing a wish that the working class be not misled by ignorant or designing men to oppose Anti-Corn Law meetings. That as Chartists they consider harm to be done to their cause by those who thrust the Charter in the path of Corn Law repeal, as a stumbling block in the way of men who are endeavouring to relieve the widow and orphan from the cruelties of the bread tax, and to strike the fetters from the hands of our suffering workmen.

"I shall see you in a few days in Manchester.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"MR. E. WATKIN." "RICHD COBDEN.

"MOSLEY STREET,
"*Tuesday.*

"My dear Sir,

"You did nobly in putting that question to McDonald,* and his answer settles the whole matter.

"If he admits the law to be unjust, and still palliates it in any way, or tries to prevent its total and *immediate* AND UNCONDITIONAL repeal, what an example he offers to the aristocracy!! Surely if one great injustice can be tolerated *by the advocates of the people's rights* on the score of *expediency*, our legislators may fairly deny the suffrage on the same ground. They may say, 'I admit the justice of your claim, but I will not give you the suffrage until you are EDUCATED, because I believe without EDUCATION the franchise will do you no good.' This is precisely the plea, in other words, set up by the *Northern Star* people—We won't have the bread tax abolished, although we admit it to be an unjust tax, until we get the Charter. Pursue the analogy a little further. If we ask the legislator (who admits the right of the people to the franchise, but denies it on the ground of expediency until the people be educated,) *when* he will undertake that the people shall be educated, he tells you he does not know. And if you ask a Chartist *when* he will obtain the suffrage, he does not know. So that the expediency of the one and the other amounts to an indefinite withholding of justice—an admirable plea for despots and knaves, but one which honest

* One of the Chartist spokesmen.

politicians will never, unless they be fools, listen to for a moment! I have set my mind upon setting the working men of Manchester right on this question, and it can be done. Would not the substance of this letter make a good short letter for Condy's paper* on Saturday; if you think so, pray write it out and send it.

"Yours very truly,
"R. COBDEN."

"London (Reform Club),
"*Tuesday.*

"My dear Sir,

"I don't think you will find Feargus to be permanently a very formidable obstacle in the way of a right move. He wants coolness and head for a leader. I have suggested to one of the new move party up here to put Sharman Crawford at their head. For my part I'll not under any circumstances diverge from the course laid down for my guidance.

"I will send the copy of your address to the *Sun*, but I don't know how far it will suit them.

"I fear I shall not be able to attend to your wish respecting the Anti-Monopolist. Besides my time being so much occupied (if you saw the deluge of letters I get!) in corresponding with all sorts of people, who seem to think me the infallible quack to cure all disorders, I think, moreover, that I should not be serving the cause by

* The *Manchester Advertiser.*

bringing my name into connexion with every movement. There is a want of *spontaneous* combustion. The Tories say it is all *Cobden and a clique.*

"Yours very truly,
"R. COBDEN.

"MR. E. WATKIN."

"LEAMINGTON,
"*19th January*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"I like your plan of sending up a deputation before the deputies meet; I shall be in Manchester next Monday, and will vote for the aid you mention. I believe it was agreed that the League should contribute something towards it. But I am strongly of opinion that no known Anti-Corn Law lecturer should be on the deputation if it could be avoided. Would Curran do? There were two or three men amongst 'the trades' who met Rawson and me that understood the question well. Could they be appointed?

"As respects your suggestion of fraternising with the O'Connorites, I don't think that party could be trusted, nor do I think they have much power now even for mischief. I should very much prefer to draw out 'the trades' of Manchester if this could be done, and to keep the agitation separate from any other. Still I think it very desirable to try to conciliate the Chartist leaders. The point to be aimed at with them should be to agree not to interrupt each other's proceedings. Could not a public

meeting be held as between Chartists and Repealers,* to agree to the resolutions as passed at the Bath Meeting, and then to agree not to interfere with the agitation of either question on its own merits?

"This would be far better than to tie yourselves neck and heels for the rest of your lives to the O'Connorites, which would be trumpeted in the *Star* as another victory.

"Ever yours,

"R. COBDEN."

"MOSLEY STREET,

"*Saturday.*

"My dear Watkin,

"I have received your excellent letter, in the contents of which I cordially concur.

"The Council of the League have agreed to aid you in the expenses of a deputation to London, which I think is a very desirable step. As respects the necessity of organization, and the importance of the working classes in carrying anything, I am completely with you, and if we can find the means to carry out your plan, we will do so. Murray is our best man. Will you put yourself in communication with the Council?

"I am going to-night to Glasgow, and shall be absent a week.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"RICHD COBDEN."

* Corn Law Repealers are here meant.

"My dear Watkin,

"I wish you would do some articles for the Anti-Bread Tax Circular. It will be impossible for me to be a contributor to any extent. You can address yourself to the interests of the working class.

"Ever yours truly,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"*Tuesday.*"

"*Private.*] "LEAMINGTON,

"*22nd January*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"You'll see by the *Times* and *Standard* that there is a desperate effort made to make it appear that the working class are not with us.

"This shews the importance they attach to their co-operation, and it proves the importance of our bringing out the trades if possible. Pray try if you can't shame them into an expression of opinion. Will they let the hired tools of their *starvers* and oppressors assert in their name that they are enamoured of the system by which they are ground to the dust? Surely the working class of this country have reached the lowest point of misery, if they are to hope for relief from such chaps as O'Connor, Fleming & Co.!

"Is there no way of putting an end to this game of cheat?

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"MR. E. WATKIN."

"*Private.*] "LONDON,
"*11th March*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"If I did not answer your letter you must not suppose I was uninterested in its contents, but I have been very much engaged of late. I send you by this post the first number of a new Chartist paper which has been forwarded to me. It has been started with some aid from the middle class. We shall see how far such a rational publication will have the support of the newspaper readers amongst the 'workies.' I am not, I confess, very sanguine; it seems to be 'either Feargus or nothing' with the most active and leading of the class. By the way, I see that Feargus was upset at the Hall of Science*; what was the secret of it?

"I expect we shall see in the next *Star* a furious attack against the 'bloodies' of the League.

"I feel the utmost difficulty in knowing what the next move ought to be. Must we lie down and die like sheep, or resist fleecing like pigs? Tell me what you think. I don't, myself, think that Mr. Brooks' outbreak has done any harm.†

"I have no objection to our members turning Chartists,

* Afterwards, in 1852, the Manchester Free Library.

† Mr. John Brooks is here spoken of. He, too, was a Manchester "alderman." At the Chamber of Commerce he had been scouting Peel's new sliding-scale; had taxed landlords with robbing the poor; and had declared for "universal suffrage." His brother was Mr. S. Brooks, the Manchester banker, whose important local improvements are partially indicated by such well-known place-names as Brooks' Bar, Brooklands, &c., &c.

but we must not turn the League into a suffrage party until there is something to be gained by it, and in the present state of the suffrage movement I see nothing to be gained by joining any party. But I hope the working class will gradually learn by their sufferings.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"RICH^{D} COBDEN."

"LONDON,

"My dear Watkin, "16*th March*, 1842.

"I should not advise you to go to law with Feargus. On the other hand, don't run your head unnecessarily into contact with his more rabid worshippers, for fear of catching no better treatment than the 'unchained lion' met with in the Hall of Science. I begin almost to despair for the working class of this country. Their wages will go down during the next two years in the cotton district nearly one-half if the present restrictions be continued, and I see no other prospect ultimately for them but the Irishman's lumpers. If the aristocracy continue to master us, we shall see in our generation a fearful deterioration of the condition of the 'workies.'

"The most provoking thing to a man of any feeling is to see the poor deluded, plundered, things misled by knaves and imposters, who, whilst pretending to conduct them towards popular liberty, are decoying them into the trap of the aristocracy. *Our* only consolation is, *we do what we can* for the 'greatest number.'

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.'

"LONDON,
"*21st March*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"Dr. Black* called on me this morning (just after I received your letter) to advise with me upon a plan for undermining the power of the 'lion,' by establishing another paper in London. I confess I have no great faith in the good effects of such a plan.

"In reiterated lying the *roaring lion* would beat any other organ. . . . . I confess I hardly see any good in playing off one dirty tool against another. But there appears to be a feeling with Dr. Black that 'the lion' has great powers for mischief which ought to be abated. I shall be in Manchester on Friday, and will talk to you about these matters.

"Ever yours truly,
"R. COBDEN."

"*Private.*] "LONDON,
"*23rd April*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"I think nothing can be more reasonable than your proposal to solicit the aid of the League in relieving the Operative Association from its embarrassments. The best plan will be for you to make a direct application, personally, to the more influential members of the Council. I don't think it would be advisable for you to mention the fact of your having applied to *me* in the first instance, for the parties on the spot would be, perhaps, a little jealous

* Sometime Editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.

of any indirect influence being brought to bear on them. If you should find any difficulty, you might afterwards make use of me; but we are all so well aware of the sacrifices you have made in every way for the cause, that I hope you will not find any impediment in your way.

"I hope this letter will reach you before you leave Manchester, and believe me,

"Yours faithfully,
"RICHD COBDEN.

"MR. E. W. WATKIN."

The following kind letter relating to myself was addressed to my father:—

"REFORM CLUB,
"*Saturday Evening, 22nd April,* 1842.

"My dear Sir,

"I am sorry to say I have no personal acquaintance with anybody in Italy. My travels have not extended to that interesting portion of Europe.* My brother-in-law, Mr. Fiers (of the firm of D. Harrigand & Co., Manchester), will, I know, be able to give introductions to Genoa, and probably to the other places you mention.

"If you are returning to Manchester before your son departs, be pleased to apply to my brother Frederic, who will procure letters for him. I have not the address at hand of any correspondent in Paris, but my brother will be able to recommend your son to Mr. Hartmann of that city for any advice or information he may require. He would, I think, be also able to procure an introduction to some

* Mr. Cobden included Italy in his tour four years later—1846-7.

house in Marseilles, probably from Gardner & Hurtos. I should be very glad to be able to render any service in the way you wish to your son Edward, for whose character, talents, and energy I have a great respect. Am I correct in the supposition that you are actuated by a prudent desire to withdraw him for a season from the vortex of political excitement into which his ardour has plunged him?

"Believe me, yours faithfully,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"A. WATKIN, ESQ."

On my return the correspondence resumed:—

"*Private.*] "LONDON,

"*22nd June*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"When I got your last letter I did not understand that you had made your trip to the Continent and back. You must have been an expeditious tourist. I should have replied to your letter if I had thought you were in Manchester.

"As respects your claim on the League, I have spoken to Mr. Rawson, the Treasurer, who is very decidedly against your being a loser. He thinks your personal services quite a sufficient contribution to the cause. He thinks we had better not write to the Council, but he undertakes to make it good on his return.

"I quite agree with you in all that you say about the movements in Manchester. It is a pity the shopkeepers

made a great public meeting of their movement. Had they met in a quieter way, and put forth their facts carefully collated, it would have had all the effect of a public meeting. In fact, public meetings have lost nearly all their force. The eternal squabblings that attend them make them anything but formidable to the aristocracy. In fact, as a rule, the public meetings for the last three years have been prejudicial to the popular cause, and until all classes can unite again they had better hold no more. I am quite of your opinion as to the failure of the *complete suffrage movement*. It must be 'Charter' or 'Corn Law repeal,' nothing between the two will do. I am rather disappointed at Sturge's movements, I thought he would have made more exertion to unite the middle and working classes. I have urged on him the necessity of doing this, and tried to persuade him to go a tour of 'reconciliation' to the North. I fear the suffrage party are going back at the present, but an accident may by-and-by unite us again. The Government is very much alarmed at the present state of the country, and any disturbance in the country would, I think, force the aristocracy to do something to conciliate the people. We are doing all we can to increase the uneasiness of the rascals.

"I hope we shall have a good deputation in London.

"Yours very truly,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"MR. E. WATKIN."

"LONDON,
"*19th July*, 1842.

"My dear Watkin,

"The plan of operation you speak of is not practicable. The attempt has often been made to practise self-denial in eating and drinking for the attainment of political ends, but it has never succeeded and never will. We have no other hope but in the continued enlightenment of the people of all classes, accelerated, as it will be, by increased suffering.

"The last month has done much towards ripening public opinion.

"Believe me, yours very truly,
"RICHD COBDEN.

"MR. E. WATKIN."

The following letters belong to the succeeding years:—

"LONDON,
"*30th March*, 1843.

"My dear Watkin,

"My sole motive in flinching from a working class tea party or other demonstration was from an anxiety to prevent any *class* feeling (as far as I could) from being mixed up in our agitation. At the same time I was reluctant to give offence, and so have left it open. If you and others think that a low-priced tea party, such as would really be convenient to the working class, would be desirable, I should yield. But I have found by experience that what are called working men's parties are not really

so, and that the tickets are taken by their masters. I fear that this would be the case again, and that I should be put to the fatigue of a second meeting of my own class instead of meeting working men. However, I am willing to take good advice if you'll obtain it.

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"*Private.*]

"I am correcting my speech upon emigration for Gadsby. If you can cause some copies (which the Council will doubtless supply) to be distributed amongst the working men, it would perhaps do good. If the ill-conditioned Chartists could be induced to read it, probably it might touch *even them*."

"LONDON,

"12*th July*, 1843.

"My dear Watkin,

"You will see in the accompanying newspaper (and in the Anti-B. T. Circular) a curious exposure of ———. I wish you would try to ferret out and expose the doings of this worthy. I suspect he has been regularly paid by the Tories.

"There is an address to Dr. Sleigh in the paper, purporting to have been signed by the people of Huddersfield in the West Riding. Now I suspect ——— was furnishing ——— with this and other ammunition of the kind for his speech at ———, when he was seized with a fit of uncontrollable acquisitiveness, which led him to take the

spoons and salt cellars. Try and help to expose this and other Tory Chartist tricks. The working people are terribly damaged as a body by men like this, whom they allow to act as their leaders.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"I observe by the last returns of stamps that the *Northern Star* has dwindled down to a circulation of about 8,000."

"LONDON,

"*3rd June*, 1844.

"Dear Watkin,

* * * * * *

"I quite agree with you as to the necessity of our being prepared to meet our opponents in the Registration Courts. Every man who has £50 to invest in a freehold at 4 per cent. ought, as an act of duty, to be a voter. I hope our friends will be encouraged by the late issue to work up the small minority.

"Entwisle has just taken his seat.* There was no attempt at a cheer; in fact, the Tories up here are not at all in a crowing mood over their narrow escape. Wilson-Patten says they were all but in despair on the Monday afternoon, thinking we should certainly beat them.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"MR. EDWARD WATKIN."

* This relates to the South Lancashire election, which Mr. W. Entwisle won in a contest with Mr. (afterwards Sir) W. Brown of Liverpool. At the next vacancy Mr. Brown and his Liberal colleague were allowed a walk over.

Mr. COBDEN and the "POTTINGER" DINNER of 1844.

In those days I was almost perennial "Honorary Secretary" to movements, big and little; and I was the Honorary Secretary to the Committee of Merchants and others who invited General Sir Henry Pottinger to a banquet in the Town Hall at Manchester, December 20, 1844.

It seemed to me that the opening up of trade with China entitled those who had fought to break down old barriers to some tribute from free-traders.

This letter is so racy, and I now think Mr. Cobden so right, that I must give it:—

"Mosley Street,

"*Monday.*

"Dear Watkin,

"I am engaged in the West Riding of York, and can't be at the Pottinger dinner. I am not sorry that circumstances prevent my sitting down with those monopolist *humbugs*, who are ready to hurrah for free trade in China, and vote against it in England. I observe your remark about doing good by giving a free trade complexion to the meet-

ing. There is danger in this *pretended* amalgamation. The Tories would like to seem to join us, in order to betray us. God knows I have made many sacrifices of feeling to abstain in times past from quarrelling with your Birleys and other manufacturing props of the Corn Law. I bore five years of their opposition and hatred without despairing of seeing them support the interests of their order by joining the ranks of the free traders. The last South Lancashire election convinced me that I had been a credulous fool, who had not understood the depth of their ignorance. Now that we have secured the county in spite of them, there is less motive for attempting the vain task of conciliating them. But there is every danger of their attempting a hollow truce with a view of betraying us hereafter, and therefore I say, keep them as they are, in the position of beaten and despised tools of the landlords.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"P.S.—Are you aware that the very same *creatures* who have given money to Sir Henry Pottinger at Preston signed that petition in favour of the present Corn Law which was presented with so much effect by Lord Stanley last Session, *the very evening of Villiers' motion?* My blood boils when I think that I am one of the same order as those grovelling sycophants. If I can find time, I'll go down to Preston and Blackburn purposely to expose them at public meetings. Our only safe policy now is to discredit those fellows

in the eyes of their followers and dependents: for themselves, they have done their worst, we have nothing to hope or fear from them."

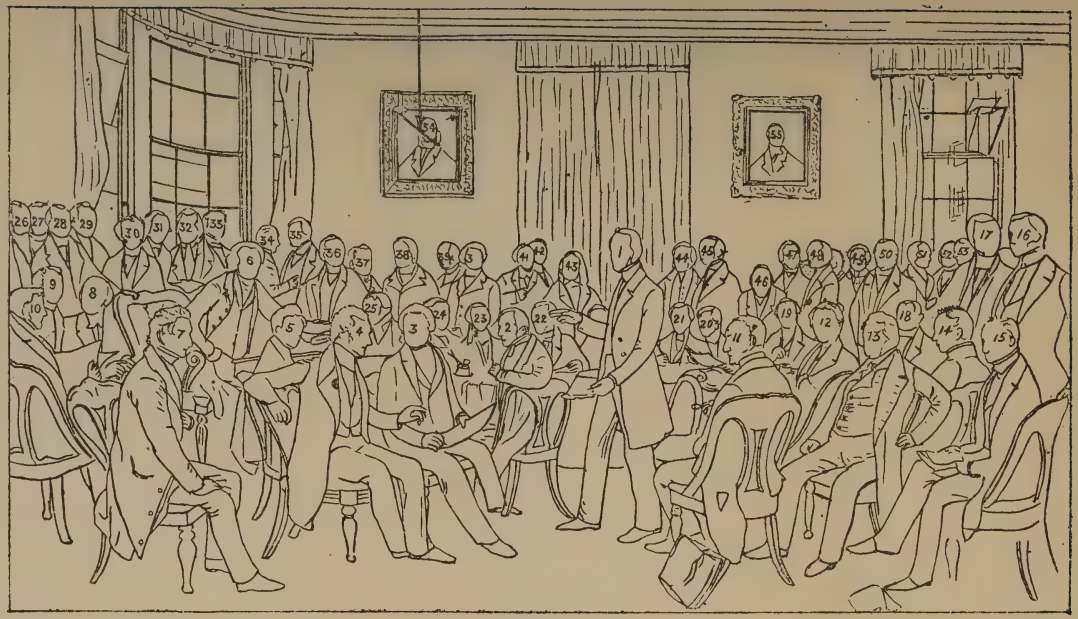
Yes, they *had* done their worst; and at the end of one more year the League had gained the day in spite of them.



Mr. COBDEN addressing the League Council.

(From the Painting by J. R. Herbert, R.A. Reproduced by permission of Messrs. T. Agnew & Sons.)

The Reader is recommended to examine the Picture with a magnifying glass. The likenesses of Mr. Cobden and others will be far more distinct, and many details also.



1 *R. Cobden.*
2 *Wm. Rawson.*
3 *John Bright.*
4 *C. P. Villiers.*
5 *T. M. Gibson.*
6 *Geo. Wilson.*
7 *R. H. Greg.*
8 *John Brooks.*
9 *J. B. Smith.*
10 *Earl Ducie.*
11 *Earl Radnor.*
12 *Archibd. Prentice.*
13 *Col. Thompson.*
14 *Wm. Brown (Liverpool).*
15 *Hamer Stansfeld.*
16 *Thos. Bazley.*
17 *Hy. Ashworth.*
18 *Jas. Chadwick.*
19 *Wm. Bickham.*
20 *Hy. Rawson.*
21 *Saml. Lees.*
22 *Thos. Woolley.*
23 *Wm. Evans.*
24 *Jas. Lumsden.*
25 *Jos. Hickin (Secretary).*
26 *Lord Kinnaird.*
27 *Rev. Dr. Massie.*
28 *John Whittaker.*
29 *Robt. Ashton.*
30 *Duncan McLaren.*
31 *Jas. Wilson (London).*
32 *A. W. Paulton.*
33 *Wm. Biggs.*
34 *John Petrie.*
35 *C. E. Rawlins, junr.*
36 *Jas. Garth Marshall.*
37 *Robert Munn.*
38 *John Dixon (Carlisle).*
39 *Jos. Scholfield.*
40 *Fredk. Schwann.*
41 *Lawrence Heyworth.*
42 *Robt. Milligan.*
43 *W. J. Fox.*
44 *Francis Place.*
45 *Edwd. Baines.*
46 *Edwd. Baxter (Dundee).*
47 *P. A. Taylor.*
48 *Dr. Bowring.*
49 *John Cheetham.*
50 *Jos. Brotherton.*
51 *Saml. Bean.*
52 *Jas. Kershaw.*
53 *W. R. Callender.*
54 *Sir Thos. Potter.*
55 *Thos. Ashton.*

THE SOUVENIRS.

THE accompanying reproduction of Herbert's picture of "Mr. Cobden addressing the League Council," is made by permission of Messrs. T. Agnew & Sons, the owners of the copyright, who presented the original painting long ago to the Peel Park Gallery, Salford. Attached is a key, by which the faces may be identified. George Wilson, of course, is in the chair. The scene is the council-room in Newall's Buildings. Until comparatively recent years a proof of the painter's minute fidelity to fact, might have been discerned by local explorers in the sign "Billiards" seen (through the window) on the opposite wall of Market Street. It was over Wovenden's Dining-rooms in the League time, and far longer. But it went the way of the League, and of Newall's Buildings, after all—immortalized though it be by the care of the Academician.*

Among minor relics of the Anti-Corn Law agitation are the League tickets of membership. Holders of them will recollect that they were not all alike. Some of the Leaguers had a framed and glazed engraving—on steel, I

* The reduced scale of the accompanying copy needs a magnifying glass to reveal the "sign," immediately behind and above the chairman's head. The glass discloses much else—the merit of Cobden's likeness especially.

think—of a family in extremity of famine, offering up the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread!" But the ticket of which a copy is here given is the one I was most familiar with.

Another symbol of the movement was known as "The Peel Velvet." Some of Cobden's friends, calico printers, got up a beautiful material in cotton velvet, closely covered all over with a small design of ears of corn, and a waistcoat-piece of it was offered* as a compliment to the Premier, Sir R. Peel. He accepted it graciously enough in the first instance, but someone with sharper eyes than his, perhaps for a lurking piece of mischief, or for the exigencies of his position, pointed out to him the significant word "Free" repeated in tiny letters on every binding of the corn. Peel thereupon politely returned the gift. Either *Mr. Punch*, or some contemporary satirist, solemnized the occasion by a cartoon depicting Lady Peel in tears over a dress-piece of the velvet, which her obdurate husband was forbidding her to wear. And for four years, at least—ending only with the Corn Law Repeal—this printed velvet, in various colours, some grave, some gay, was in fashion with Free Traders—men, women, and children alike—some wearing gowns of it, some coats, vests, or jackets. I regret to have been unable to procure a specimen, in time for reproduction here, of the graceful pattern of stalks and ears.

In this place also, for want of one more appropriate, I

* By Mr. Barlow, of Ancoats Vale.



NATIONAL ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE.

Registered Member

N° Matthew P. Robinson Hoadley

Member's Ticket (facsimile). [p. 102]



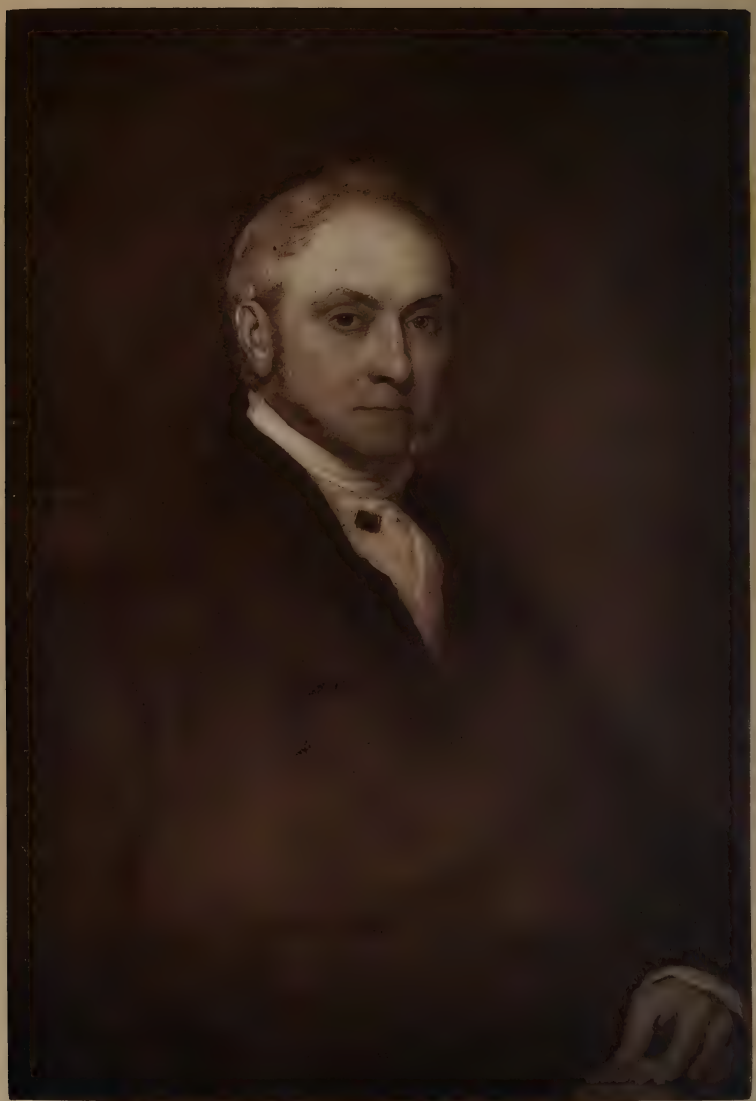
COBDEN'S ONLY SON (RICHARD BROOKS) at the age of 5.

To face p. 108 (4)



COBDEN'S ONLY SON at the age of 15. Died 1856.

To face p. 103 (8)



COBDEN'S FATHER.

(*From a Portrait in Later Life.*)

To face p. 103 (2)





COBDEN'S MOTHER, *née* Millicent Amber. Died 1825.

COBDEN'S FATHER, William Cobden. Died 1833.

(*From Miniature Likenesses taken shortly before Marriage.*)

To face p. 103 (1)

introduce copies of miniatures (lent me by Miss Cobden-Sale) of Cobden's father and mother, as they appeared shortly before their wedding, now near a century gone by; also a likeness of Cobden's father of much later date. The curious may trace in the son's features the share of resemblance to each parent.

Along with these are two likenesses of the "only boy," the story of whose sudden death at a German school fills a chapter of melancholy interest in Mr. Morley's "Life" of Cobden.

Of the "Athenæum" picture (page 122), and the "Free Trade Hall" (page 163), it must be owned that they illustrate the Manchester atmosphere rather than the architectural designs. The pictures are less agreeable than those shillingsworths of local views which are not tied down to photographic reality.

The view of Stevenson Square is perhaps more like what it is now than what it was in 1841. A warehouse stands in the place of St. Clement's, and there are other rebuildings that might be noted. But half-a-century of change has left the look of the place as mean and unlovely as ever.

These and other Manchester scenes and portraits (including the League picture) were photographed for me under the superintendence of Miss Dacre; while Mr. F. W. Lawson has similarly obliged me in the reproduction of the Dunford garden scene, the group of Cobden family portraits, and the admirable copy for the frontispiece.

THE HELPLESS AND THE WOUNDED OF THE LEAGUE.

We who worked to remove taxes on the people's food saw many of the poorest and the most needy. And there were many worthy, good, sober, hard-working people whose misery was excessive. Notably there was the case of old Mr. Moore, the handloom weaver of Rochdale Road, who used to speak against the Corn Laws with great sense and force at meetings of the working classes. He had Mr. Cobden's shilling a week for long; but he is long since dead.

Then when the fight was over there were many wounded; many who could not get employment because they had been agitators; some who had got acclimatised to public meetings and political excitement, and could hardly settle down again quietly to work for their living; many who had sacrificed, by loss of time and of work, their own interest and that of their families for the cause—in the long night struggle before the dawn came in 1846—and there were few to help.

Mr. Cobden was always at hand. So was Mr. Bright. So were some others,—so were not all.

The last of those of the working men's organization we

pensioned with a few shillings a week in their old age, decrepitude — blindness — was my old colleague James Morris, letterpress printer. He died only seven years ago. He used to come to my office at London Road Station every month while he could to get his bit of money, and now and then have a chat. But for some time he had to keep his bed, and all that could be done was to send his allowance and kind wishes.

Murray, our best lecturer to working men, died in the office he had held for years, as station master at Bulkington, on the Trent Valley Railway. The true orator who did much for the cause, but who was not a careful man, and whose name I have struck out in the letters referring to him, is dead. The other most useful and self-sacrificing man unnamed is long since dead; but he passed away relieved of the anxieties that had pursued him for years.

And so they are all whom we tried privately to aid—dead. But I wish the following letters to remain behind, in testimony. They are merely samples of many, now destroyed.

"*Private.*] "REFORM CLUB, LONDON,
"*24th August*, 1841.

"My dear Sir,

"I wish you would enquire quietly about the circumstances and character of old Moore, the weaver, who gave such a pitiable account of his condition before the Conference. If he really is only getting 3*s.* 6*d.* a week, I should like to allow him a 1*s.* a week. Will you make this

enquiry, and if he be deserving, will you take the trouble to get the money from my brother, and give it him regularly? Tell him not to speak about it.

"Yours truly,

"R. COBDEN."

Good old Moore accordingly received his "1*s.* a week" at my father's warehouse in High Street, Manchester, for several years—together with other shillings now and then.

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*Friday, 28th January*, 1848.

"My dear Watkin,

"Here is £30 (halves) for ———. Let me have an acknowledgment, and I will send the others. I hope he will get into a career of employment.

"Believe me, faithfully yours,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"ED. WATKIN, ESQ."

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"31*st January*, 1848.

"My dear Watkin,

"I send you the other halves, and also ———'s I O U, which had better be destroyed, with his knowledge, for it is a pity to let him have a debt upon his mind which I should never allow him to pay.

"I am not surprised to see that even your father has caught the contagion of the day, and is for having a 'special' fight with the malcontent Irish. Never were

my peace doctrines so much at a discount as at the present moment in England. Wait till we count the cost of all this marching, arming, and drilling, and then John Bull will be more open to pacific overtures. Depend on it, there are faults on both sides when a Government and its population are so often brought into attitudes of defiance. To have to resort habitually to physical force to sustain political institutions will, in the end, place them in the wrong in the eyes of the whole civilized world, and then, when their moral support is gone, they will fall some fine morning about our ears, as they have done in so many other countries; that is to say, unless we contrive in the meantime by moral means to bring the vast majority of the population on the side of said institutions.

"Will you hand the enclosed to ———?

"And believe me, faithfully,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ."

The next letters refer to Murray, the worthy North of Ireland man before mentioned, whose infirmity was simply the natural decay of old age:—

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"11*th May*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"Read the enclosed and tell me whether you think the poor fellow's brain is diseased. I wish you would, moreover, step out of the routine of your office to do an

act of humanity to one whose former conduct (at least) merited respect and consideration, and ascertain exactly what is really Murray's present condition in mind, body, and estate.

"A line from you will much oblige, and believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"RD COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,
"*15th May*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"I am very, very much obliged to you for all the trouble you have taken about poor Murray. I have to-day sent him £5, and written to ask him if he cannot get a holiday, now the fine weather is come, and go and see his old League friends in Manchester. I have said nothing to him about having corresponded with you on the subject.

"As respects Alcomb, I have nothing more to say, except to thank you for the trouble you have taken, and I remain,

"Very truly yours,

"RIC. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"MIDHURST,
"*13th October*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"I have to thank you for forwarding me the enclosed, with its melancholy tidings of our poor old friend and colleague.

"Upon the first news of his serious illness, which I received from himself, I sent him a letter offering to be security for payment for any little comforts required by him. To-day has brought me a note from a Mr. Orton, which I enclose. I know nothing of him, and should feel much obliged by your inquiring for me a little into the *bona fides* of the transaction. In my note to poor Murray I offered to guarantee the payment of his bills for the supply of certain comforts which he said he stood in need of, but I did not consider it a security for the loan of money. However, I am willing to pay whatever he has really had, and only ask you to ascertain for me whether the enclosed is all right. I know nobody to whom I can write. It is clear that poor Murray's mind is affected, and it requires great caution in dealing with those who come in contact with him; and believe me

"Faithfully yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"MANCHESTER,

"*1st November*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"Your letter has followed me here. You ought not to be put to a farthing of expense for poor Murray. Whatever you have advanced, or think of advancing, will be gladly paid by G. Wilson out of the League Fund. We have a large surplus on hand, and no more legitimate

mode of expending it could be devised than smoothing the way to the grave for an old and faithful servant.

"Pray let me know what you have advanced. You will have plenty other opportunities of spending your money charitably.

"Have you anything in prospect for my model man Pope? Or have you forgotten him?

"Ever yours truly,
"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ.

"I shall be in Westbourne Terrace on Thursday."

About this time I also received letters on behalf of other sufferers and *protégés*, for some of whom Mr. Cobden sought employment in the railway service.

In a postscript Mr. Cobden arraigned me thus:—

"What is the name of the Goods Manager at Birmingham? Here is a fac-simile of your writing, but is 'Eborak' an English or an Arabic name?

"There ought to have been an exhibition of penmanship at the World's Fair—but you would certainly not have got the prize. Be good enough to send me his name in a legible hand:—

"Fac-simile traced on the window,
"Mr. EBORAK."

My explanation brought the following:—

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,
"*30th January*, 1853.

"My dear Watkin,

"Your friend Mr. Eborall has not yet sent for my rustic *protégé*, Hopkins. If you think he has forgotten, will you be good enough to remind him? By the way, this young man is a little above the ordinary run of agricultural labourers. He can read, and has, I think, spirit enough to learn to write.

"I remain, very truly yours,
"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

The following relates to a case not altogether dissimilar to Cobden's own in the sacrifice of private fortune through devotedness to public objects:—

"*Confidential.*] "PARIS,
"*3rd August*, 1860.

"My dear Watkin,

"I write only for your own eye. Your letter has given me great pain. I have long suspected all that you tell me. My pain is the greater that I cannot interfere in the way you request. I have been a burden and a nuisance to the good men to whom you allude, and who are leaving this to-day for Manchester. My own affairs have left me no alternative but to impose on their kindness to an extent which with any other less intimate and cordial friends would have been intolerable to both sides.

"Still, I am conscious of the goodness which prompts

you to help our friend, and I hope you will at all events do something to relieve the poor lady from her present undeserved embarrassments. I can only regret that in the quarters where you are likely to be an applicant, I am more likely to be an obstacle than a help to you.

"But though this is not the proper moment, I cannot help adding an earnest wish that our friend would undertake some remunerative employment. His energy and his still comparatively young age make it quite possible for him to earn an independent income. (If I were as free from political engagements I would practise what I preach.) He would be a happier man, and even his political influence would be increased by his being known to be in an independent social position. I am quite sure that if he resolved to devote his talents to a private occupation of any kind, he would place his family easily beyond the necessity of relying on your good offices. Try what a candid appeal to our friend on this point will do. In the meantime do not let *her* want.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN."

I find these entries in my diary relative to the subscription I was promoting, and to the letter above quoted:—

"JULY 31 (1860).—S. P. Robinson and I have resolved to get up a subscription for Mrs. ———— and her children. She is and has been in a sort of respectable

distress, and looking very sad. Her husband to some extent helpless."

"Aug. 6.—Very affecting letter from Cobden about the ——— subscription, and his recent aid from his friends."

"Aug. 11.—The subscription going on well."

Mr. Cobden was then in Paris, immersed (as he described it) in the business of the Commercial Treaty, and still harassed by the condition of his private affairs, yet never able to resist (as I shall show in later passages) the promptings of his benevolence and generosity towards others.

MR. COBDEN AND THE MANCHESTER ATHENÆUM.

THAT Mr. Cobden was the founder of the Manchester Athenæum is beyond doubt; and that the influence of that institution has been always considerable, and often great, is matter of notoriety. My part in the management did not begin till after the finances got into difficulty; and as a director—elected in 1843; as an honorary secretary for the great bazaar of 1843; as the projector of the great literary soirées of 1843, 1844, and 1845—I did my best, with the able aid of my secretarial colleague, the late Peter Berlyn, of useful and pleasant memory, and of Capes, Browne, Harling, Lynill, Atherton, James Heywood, F.R.S., Alexr. Kay, and others,* to help to restore the fortunes of the institution.

* I may name Vembergue, the French professor; Thos. Cooper, dancing ditto; James Edwards, the Anti-Corn-Law Leaguer; R. Penny, known among us by the by-name of "Struggle," to commemorate the emphasis with which he declared we were engaged in one; W. Coveney, afterwards a Great Eastern Railway director; Marsden, so well remembered for his services in establishing the Manchester Saturday half-holiday; C. J. Saul, French Consul in Manchester; and also Charles Sever, Barber, W. H. Myers, Dr. Satterthwaite, C. Pountney, M. Curtis, A. Ireland, Zebulon Leigh, J. Moor, B. Syddall, J. P. Culverwell, J. Burton, T. S. Clayton, E. P. Lamport, F. Robinson, H. T. Robberds, T. Smelt, F. Broughton, J. Dunn, J. Holbrook, and A. Henry, afterwards M.P.

Mr. Cobden had been in the United States, and he had seen the big crop of "Institutions" there. In Manchester he found nothing but the "Mechanics' Institute"—nothing for the "middling" classes, including our clerks and helpers in warehouses and stores.

The first time I saw Mr. Cobden was at a meeting held at "Hayward's Hotel," Bridge Street, Manchester, on Wednesday, October 28th, 1835, Mr. John Macvicar, the boroughreeve, in the chair. Mr. Macvicar was a grand Scotchman, one of the fine breed of educated and travelled merchants, who did large transactions in a princely way—men of truth, honour, and capacity. He was a member of the Manchester "Golf Club," who were wont to play on Kersal Moor on Friday afternoons clothed in red coats—and mostly decked in Tartan bonnets.

The "large room" was full, the platform good; and to the sixth resolution Mr. Cobden spoke. He was the "new light." He was, to most people there, an unknown man. He spoke rapidly, but epigrammatically, and "took" with the audience all through. His was the speech of the evening. I am sorry that the following abstract is the best thing I am able to procure, and dare not amend it from memory, though every omitted word and gesture comes back vividly to my mind:—

Mr. Cobden said it had been the hardest duty of the promoters of the institution to detach it from party feeling, and, generally speaking, they had done even better, by neutralizing conflicting shades of difference, and securing public opinion in its favour. But the canvassers had met

with one very small, amiable, and timid class who were not so easy to conciliate, and who had asked, in two or three instances, "What kind of books do you propose to allow to be read?" It was obviously impossible for any individuals to direct what kind of books should be received into the library. He wished he could influence this timid class to go with him in having a better and more just opinion of human nature than to suppose that if a thousand people were congregated together for the purpose of intellectual and refined recreation, they would herd together for purposes of infidel, irreligious, or obscene studies. Men secluded themselves for the purpose of prosecuting such debasing studies; they did not pursue them in a crowd. Persons who cultivated such tastes were isolated, or at most they but hunted in couples. Could it be supposed that literary studies were inimical to a successful pursuit of commerce? It had been said by an aristocratic poet, that "while commerce fills the purse, she clogs the brains;" but he thought the history of commerce proved the very reverse of this—that wherever commerce alighted and made her abode, the decencies and refinements of life arose, the arts sprang up in her train, and spread from those spots to enlighten and to bless the whole earth. (Cheers.) In this institution, its promoters had endeavoured to combine every attraction which could be brought to bear under one roof; they had endeavoured to make it social without the possibility of its becoming licentious; they had united the attractions of the news-room, the library, and lectures. Under all the circum-

stances, he thought it could not fail to prosper. Certainly a town like Manchester, growing at the rate of 10,000 or 12,000 souls a-year, ought to increase in establishments like this. It would be a shame that while they were erecting mills in every direction for the manufacture of cotton, they could not have one manufactory for working up the raw intelligence of the town, which was of a most excellent staple, free from the rust of antiquity and the dust of prejudice—it would be a shame if they could not get up one mill to produce some valuable mental manufacture. He expected that, like the railway shares, for which there was now a mania, the shares of this institution would no sooner get into the market than they would be bought up. Let not the shares be raised to a premium: for the shareholders might in that case depend upon it that the committee would build another institution. (Laughter.) He did not expect that they would have the nursing of the infancy, the rocking of the cradle of this institution, but rather that it would start into life at once, in the full and perfect vigour of maturity. (Cheers.)

Some years afterwards, in 1844, driving with Mr. Cobden from the Club at the top of King Street, Manchester, to the house of Mr. James Atherton, the then President of the Athenæum, at Swinton Park, to meet Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Disraeli at dinner—Mr. Disraeli being President of the Great Literary Soirée of that year—we talked of that speech. Cobden said he well remembered it—it was the first time he had ever addressed a large assembly: that when he rose he could *see no one;* that he felt he was speaking his pre-

pared speech very rapidly; that as he got on, and the meeting cheered him, first one head and then another popped up into sight, till at last that which was at first an aggregated and indivisible mass, appeared in individual and distinct shape before him. It was known to his friends in later years that, practised as a speaker before all sorts of audiences, and under all sorts of conditions, he usually felt some nervousness at starting.*

The *Manchester Guardian* on the 31st October, 1835, reports the meeting I have referred to, held on the previous Wednesday evening (October 28th), at which the Athenæum was definitively established, and many shareholders, subscribers, and donors were enrolled.

Mr. Cobden spoke in seconding the sixth resolution, which was as follows:—

"That the gentlemen now appointed directors be invested with powers to carry into effect the resolutions of this meeting, and to make such arrangements for the tem-

* Here, also, I may quote Mr. Cobden's own avowal of his distaste for the *rôle* of public speaker. These words occur in his speech at the meeting to dissolve the League, on the 2nd of July, 1846, in the Manchester Town Hall:—"Many people will think that we have our reward in the applause and *éclat* of public meetings; but I declare that it is not so with me, for the inherent reluctance I have to address public meetings is so great that I do not even get up to present a petition to the House of Commons without reluctance. I therefore hope I may be believed when I say that, if this agitation terminates now, it will be very acceptable to my feelings; but if there should be the same necessity, the same feeling which impelled me to take the part I have taken will impel me to a new agitation—ay, and with tenfold more vigour, after having had a little time to recruit my health."

porary accommodation of the members as they may deem advisable; that they be requested to present to the first annual meeting a body of rules, conformable to the laws by which the Athenæum is now established; and that they be instructed to call the first annual meeting of the members in the month of January, 1837."

The previous week's number of the *Guardian*, October 24th, contains the advertisement of resolutions passed at a meeting on the 13th October, at the York Hotel, Mr. James Heywood in the chair. Mr. Cobden took part in this meeting, but no report of what was said was published. Mr. Cobden was then appointed one of a committee to prepare a report as to the best means of establishing the proposed institution, and it was as a member of the committee that he spoke at the meeting above mentioned on the 28th October.

Here is a memorandum of some dates in the early annals of the Athenæum, by which Mr. Cobden's official connection with it may be traced:—

"The opening meeting of the Athenæum was held at the Royal Institution, Mosley Street, January 11th, 1836. Mr. Cobden is not named in any report as having been present. Mr. James Heywood (President of the Athenæum) delivered the inaugural address. In the Royal Institution the Athenæum was housed, so to speak, until its own building was erected on an adjoining site.

"At the *first annual meeting*, January 25th, 1837, Mr. Cobden's name appears as Chairman of the Committee of Directors.

"May 26th, 1837, the corner-stone of the new building was laid by Mr. Heywood. Mr. Cobden presented to him a silver trowel on behalf of the directors.

"January 31st, 1838: the second annual meeting; Mr. Cobden was elected one of the vice-presidents.

"October 28th, 1839: the fourth anniversary; a meeting was held to celebrate the opening of the new building. The Manchester papers of October 30th report two speeches of 'Mr. Alderman Cobden' on the occasion.

"January 27th, 1841: fifth annual meeting; Mr. Cobden elected President of the Athenæum for the year 1841-2.

"January 26th, 1842: sixth annual meeting; Mr. Cobden, M.P., again a vice-president.

"January 25th, 1843: seventh annual meeting; Mr. Cobden's name disappears from the official list. He, however, attended some of the public meetings of the institution subsequently."

But during these periods, a religio-political difficulty arose, and at the annual election of directors of the Athenæum in 1838, a dead set was made against the Unitarians, candidates for office.

Mr. Cobden spoke on the subject more than once at the annual meeting. First of all, in moving the adoption of the directors' report, he remarked, that in the choice of directors he should look to those whose characters gave the best guarantee for the performance of their duties with discretion and with satisfaction to the great body of the members. He should not inquire for any man's religion (great cheering), or step out of his way to ask for a man's

politics. (Renewed cheers.) He should ask first for character, and next for intelligence. Without character, intelligence was a mighty engine of evil. But having found these, he should next ask, How have they been thrown into the scale to benefit this institution? (Loud cheers.) Then Mr. Cobden went on to point out that in the trust-deed that was being prepared to settle the property of the shareholders in the Athenæum, the power of control was placed absolutely in the hands of the subscribers at large. This was, within his knowledge, the sole example of an institution founded on those liberal principles, the shareholders taking no precaution to guard themselves or guarantee themselves any direction in its affairs. Unless they were not only shareholders but also subscribers, they could not vote at the annual meetings. He did not say that such liberality was any claim on their part to be elected directors. But he thought well enough of human nature to feel sure that the subscribers would reciprocate the confidence thus reposed in them, and render back to the shareholders at least a fraction of that absolute power which the shareholders had placed in their hands. (Cheers.) *

Again, in answer to a suggestion that Unitarian candidates, if rejected, might discontinue subscribing, Mr. Cobden said it did not follow that such disinterested and enlightened men would themselves hold back their contributions to the building-fund. But it was for the

* The capital was £10,000, in £10 shares.

members to ask themselves whether they could honourably condescend to accept money from those whom they repudiated as men.

I well remember the meeting, and the indignation of Mr. Cobden. "Why," he asked, "should the people called Unitarians be omitted from the lists?" He reminded the meeting that out of the £10,000 subscribed for the erection of the Athenæum building, £3,200 was promised by Unitarians. The original promoters of the institution had laboured to put upon the directorate representatives of every sect of Christians and every shade of party politics. He asked if the hopes of the founders that this should be a temple worthy of the intelligence, the science, and the literature of a great community were to be blighted, and an altar erected in it to the demon of intolerance? The Test Act had been withdrawn from municipal and civil corporations; surely it was not to be revived in this joint stock incorporation of intelligence, the doors of which had been opened to all sects, creeds, and parties, offering welcome to all, exclusion to none? And he continued with the scathing words, "If the ashes of the Inquisition, still smouldering in benighted Spain, are to be fanned into a flame by the breath of a gloomy fanaticism, it shall not be HERE."

This narrow spirit, and the differences it led to, had much to do with the difficulties and debts with which the institution had to contend. The excess cost of the building under the charge of Mr. Barry, the architect of the Houses of Parliament, forced the directors to borrow



THE MANCHESTER ATHENÆUM.

(*The Royal Institution adjacent.*)

To face p. 122

money, and matters looked very serious. The Bazaar and the Great Literary Soirée of 1843 helped us through; and the Soirée of 1844, if I remember rightly, led to financial independence. The Soirée of 1843 was stamped with success by the presidency of Charles Dickens, just back from America; his book, "American Notes for General Circulation," then sounding in everybody's ears.

We were indebted for the presence of Charles Dickens to the kind influence of his elder sister—Mrs. Burnett—a self-denying saint, if ever one existed; to whose character the few references in Forster's "Life of Dickens" bear clear witness, though they cannot do it justice.

My diary of the time records:—

"Mr. Dickens wrote to us, desiring an interview for Wednesday night, October 4, at about 9 o'clock, to arrange for the meeting.

"By arrangement with Mr. Samuel Giles, whose brother had assisted in the education of Dickens, we [Berlyn and I] took tea with him, and then walked to Mrs. Burnett's house, 3, Elm Terrace, Higher Ardwick. Ringing the bell, the door was opened by a youth in livery, who informed us that Mr. Dickens was in the drawing-room, obtained our names, and running briskly up two or three steps, looked round, and desired us to 'Please walk up.' Throwing open a door opposite the landing, our guide announced us, and we entered. Shaking hands with Mr. and Mrs. Burnett, we were at once introduced by Mrs. Burnett to her brother, standing with one hand on the chimney-piece. He cordially welcomed us, and asked us to take some wine, and

in passing the decanter, upset his own glass, and deluged a very pretty book lying on the table.

"Removing the book, he commenced the business conversation by asking as to the programme of the meeting. This I briefly gave him. We then spoke of the speakers, and talked of their several qualities in a free and laughing manner—Dickens elevating his eyebrows and nodding his head forward as the remarks struck him. An interjection as to the doubt he had in 'Pickwick' cast upon 'swarries,' provoked a quick, funny glance, which preluded an immediate turn of the talk to something else. 'Whom do you intend to place beside me?' said Dickens. 'We thought Mr. and Mrs. Burnett,' I replied, 'as we imagined you would like better to have them with you, than to be environed by perfect strangers. Of course we wish to put off, if possible, the customary stiffness and stateliness of such meetings on this occasion. We wish to consult your comfort and wishes.' 'No, I should not wish that,' he rejoined, 'by any means. I am obliged, but I could not allow that. You must look at the result upon your object in choosing my supporters.' 'Then,' we replied, 'we might place Mr. Cobden on one side and the Mayor on the other.' 'That would do very well—excellently.' 'Or we might place a better mixture of parties. Perhaps we could place Mr. Cobden and Mr. James Crossley side by side, and thus make violent political opponents for once put aside their differences for the good of the Athenæum.' 'That would be beautiful. If you can get them to sit together, it will be excellent indeed. . . . Then this meeting, I see, is to be held in the Free

Trade Hall.' (Then followed inquiries as to the size of the room, &c., &c.) 'You had 10,000 in it at the Education meeting, had you not?' said Dickens, addressing Giles.

"Then we went into the history of the Athenæum—spoke of the class to be benefited by it—of their sufferings and wants. In all this Dickens appeared to take great interest. A remark as to opposition to such educational institutions by the bigoted, and the difficulty of reconciling all political bias, so as to make all men in this case work together, caused Dickens to say, 'Well, we must do all we can to obtain the assistance of all classes; but if a *certain* party choose to oppose the education of the masses, we cannot help it. We must go on in spite of them.'

"Speaking of the partial want of due sympathy with the intellectual welfare of the people, and of the necessity of bringing to the aid of the institution a celebrity like his—superior to party predilections, and powerful with all men—he said—modestly disclaiming some of the merit we wished to attach to his visit,—'Yes, such institutions are most necessary and most useful, and there is a too general desire to get the utmost possible amount of work out of men instead of a generous wish to give the utmost possible opportunity of improvement. I shall enforce the necessity and usefulness of such invaluable means of education. *I must put it into them strong*' (or 'give it them strong').

"Speaking of the bazaar and its proceeds, he displayed a complete knowledge of all the history of the undertaking. He said it would not do to talk too much of the result being

yet insufficient—'I suppose I may say that the debts of the institution are in rapid course of liquidation, eh! that will be the way.'

Mr. Giles happened to hint about the utility of appealing to the audience from the chair for money. To this I objected that it would be unfair to Dickens, and too much like making a marketable commodity of him. He said, 'Yes, I should not like to do that; but I will try to excite their liberality in another and equally or more useful way.'

"He spoke of Lord Brougham and his note of apology. Dickens said he had received a note from his Lordship, regretting his inability to attend the soirée—'but how would Cobden and Brougham consort or agree together?' 'Oh! we have no cause to remember political differences—they are no business of ours.' 'Oh! of course not; but you should have Mr. Bright there to make the set complete.'

"We then spoke of miscellaneous matters—music and the taste for it amongst the rest. Alluding to the new systems, it was mentioned that Mr. Burnett taught the singing class at the Athenæum. 'Ah! so he tells me,' he replied, as I thought with the air of one who seemed to wish 'not too much to be said about that.'

"We arranged that he should come into the hall immediately after tea. He talked of the *effect*. 'Get the tea all over—I must confess to a sort of horror of tea-things (or tea on a grand scale), and I think the best way to excite and keep up the interest would be to appear immediately after tea, *and go to work at once*.'



Tickets for the Soirée, 1843. [p. 127]

Not Transferable.

Member's Ticket.

Mr. Megaham

"Berlyn handed him a number of the *Bazaar Chronicle*, and told him his friend Pickwick had been helpful to that document.* He received the papers, slightly laughed, and turned the conversation from his works. Berlyn told him we had taken a liberty with his portrait (by placing it upon the ticket). He praised the ticket, and declared we were welcome to make any use we liked either of the portrait or of the original.

"We spoke of future plans for benefiting the institution, and of our intention and hope of being able to establish others. 'The once sure success of one institution will of itself establish others elsewhere,' he said; 'therefore the Manchester Athenæum is not the sole thing depending upon your efforts: it is the principle of athenæums that you are really struggling for.'

"After some further conversation, we arranged to meet him at the Athenæum in the morning at twelve, and to

* *E.g.* "Mr. Pickwick arrived yesterday at the Bazaar . . . . accompanied only by Mr. Tracy Tupman, ... and was made to 'put in' sixteen raffles, and to expend £1 : 4*s.* 9½*d.* in miscellaneous goods. 'They will please Sam's children,' said Mr. Pickwick. Handing over a handsome sum to Mrs. Milner Gibson at her stall, and desiring her to lay it out for him according to her own taste, Mr. Pickwick received in return for his money, twelve pincushions, four babies' slippers, two inkstands, some engravings, three ladies' caps, and a splendid large cushion, which latter he magnanimously declared he would, 'notwithstanding the injuries she had attempted to do him,' send as a present to Mrs. Bardell. . . . . 'Put into this raffle, sir,' said a handsome young lady to Mr. P. 'Raffles I don't like,' said Mr. Tupman; 'they are, in my opinion, a contrivance for cheating the public.' 'You are wrong, sir,' rejoined Mr. P.; 'they are a very harmless mode of exciting that more vigorous agitation of the pecuniary atmosphere which people commonly call "raising the wind." Put down Mr. Tupman's name, my dear.'" and many pages of the like.

take him to the meeting in the evening (with James Heywood), and rose to go. While standing, the 'numerous advantages' of the Athenæum were again dragged upon the carpet. After naming them all, he added, briskly and laughingly—'And two balls, two concerts, per annum.' He saw us down stairs, and we departed.

"On Thursday morning we obtained the attendance of Cobden, the Mayor,* Sir Thomas Potter, Milner Gibson, James Heywood, Langton, and one or two others, at the Athenæum; and on Dickens' arrival we (B. and I) introduced them to him. We then all walked round the institution, talked about it in all ways, dived into its cellars, and mounted to its top, calling at the Courts of Bankruptcy on the way.† Then we went to the Free Trade Hall, amid sundry jokes about Crossley and Cobden, political parties, &c., &c.

"Dickens was much pleased with the hall; immediately on entering it he said he *felt* he could make himself exceedingly well heard in it.‡

"Passing near the gallery, Cobden archly pointed to the sheaves of wheat painted on the sides, and said people had tried with a microscope and had been unable to discover the word 'free' upon it. 'Ah! but you should send for Mr. Barlow§ and let him try,' cried Dickens.

* Mr. Kershaw, afterwards M.P. for Stockport.

† One of our means of raising money was to let an entire floor of the building to the Bankruptcy Commissioners, and more than twenty years passed before the Athenæum, even in its prosperity, flourished sufficiently to do without the rent they paid us for their court-rooms.

‡ Not the present building, but one of its predecessors—1840–55.

§ Mr. Dickens evidently remembered the Barlow-Peel-velvet affair (see p. 102).

"In the evening James Heywood called with his carriage at the Athenæum, and we [Berlyn and I] went to Burnett's in it with him. We found Dickens waiting, and, as we had a few minutes to spare, we sat down to talk. I told him that we should have invited a General Duff Green, an American now in Manchester, to attend the soirée but for the exasperation felt by the Yankees ever since his 'exposure' of them. 'Ah, General Green, I know. Never mind—the Americans will thank me for it themselves in ten years hence.' He spoke of Cobden—thought he had been older than he was. We then spoke of the 'manufacturing district face' and the prematurely aged appearance of the people about here, &c.

"On the way to the hall we talked of Hood and Jerrold. Dickens lamented Hood's ill-health and poverty, and much praised his writings; admired Jerrold and lauded *Punch*, which, he said, he generally 'saw before it was in print.'

"I tried to turn the talk upon America. Heywood asked about the society of the American Universities. Dickens praised it highly—said it was of necessity a little world within itself—that its members banded themselves together in order to protect themselves from the system by the evils of which they were surrounded. He said he had formed friendships amongst them which would last his life. He praised the society of Boston, and I think of New York and Philadelphia, and said the feeling against slavery was stronger than people imagined, and was growing.

"I noticed that Dickens occasionally said, when in-

terested in conversation, 'Oh, lord (or law), yes!' 'Oh, law, no!'—a cockneyism.

"Dickens is in appearance about thirty-five or thirty-six years of age,* about 5 feet 8 inches high, elegantly, compactly, but slightly, made; his face is not, strictly speaking, *handsome;* the features are not *very* good, as some people say they are. His eyes are very dark and full of fire, and, when turned upon you, give a light to his rather dark countenance, such as I have seldom before seen beaming upon any face. He has a good deal of the eyebrow-elevating, shoulder-shrugging, and head-nodding peculiar to people who have travelled a great deal. His voice is well regulated and strong, but there is an occasional slight peculiarity, of which the defect of 'maw-mouthed' people would be the extreme caricature. He can look very expressively. When he looks 'droll,' he looks *very* droll; when interested, deeply so. His hair is dark brown and abundant."

On the morning of the day on which the soirée of October 5th, 1843, was to be held, I received by messenger a hurried, wafered note from Mr. Cobden as follows:—

"Mosley St,

"Dear Sir, "*Wednesday.*

"Mr. Benjn Disraeli, the author of 'Vivian Grey,' is at the Mosley Arms Hotel, with Mrs. Disraeli.

"I wish you would call and invite them to the soirée.

"Yours truly,

"Mr. E. Watkin, "R. COBDEN.
"High St."

* Actually, he was under thirty-two.

They were invited accordingly. Mr. Disraeli made an admirable speech, and he presided at the next soirée, in 1844.

In 1844 Mr. Disraeli brought with him his friends, the "Young England" party; and it amused me much at the time to read the first sentence of the following letter:—

"*Private.*] "NATIONAL ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE,
"67, FLEET STREET, LONDON,
"*9th July*, 1844.

"My dear Watkin,

"Those Young Englanders are sad political humbugs; but, nevertheless, if you think an importation of them will help the Athenæum, I can't quarrel with your tactics. Ben. D'Israeli will make a good Chairman. If Lord John Manners and Smythe accompany him, you should take care to have an admixture of native and liberal talent, so as to prevent the appearance of one-sidedness. If Mr. Robert Hyde Greg could be induced to take a prominent part it would be desirable. I confess I don't like the idea of Manchester throwing itself too exclusively upon the patronage of the landed aristocracy. But you are not to blame. The fault lies with the 'aristocracy of industry,' who are wanting in self-respect and do not stand by their order.

"I shall, of course, be entirely at the disposal of the Committee.

"Believe me, yours faithfully,

"RICHD COBDEN."

A year afterwards, when we desired Lord Macaulay to preside, Mr. Cobden wrote to me :—

"LONDON,
"*21st April*, 1845.

"My dear Watkin,

"I got a letter from Mr. J. Edwards yesterday about Macaulay, and have answered it to-day.

"Macaulay pleads intentional absence from England as an excuse. He is not certain he shall be on the Continent, but is so far uncertain that he can't make so positive an engagement as to take the chair. But he says if you will find another Chairman, he will agree, if in England, to be present. He told me he had not received the reports and documents which you promised to send him; had you not better forward them, and try what effect they may have? Between ourselves, I suspect the ex-Cabinet Minister does not exactly relish being the successor of Sidonia. By the way, do you observe how cunningly Peel has divided the Young Englanders? To be sure, he laid on the 'soft sawder' with a trowel upon Smythe, but it will puzzle D'Israeli to neutralize its effects. But in truth there is nothing congenial between the natures of Manners and Smythe on the one hand and D'Israeli on the other. I suppose the latter will give us another Peel-ipic soon.

"Believe me, yours truly,
"R. COBDEN."

I cannot close this brief chapter on Mr. Cobden and his services in founding and supporting the Manchester

Athenæum, without quoting his speech at the soirée of 1844 (Disraeli in the chair):—

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

"To me there is no greater difficulty in addressing an audience than to find myself in the position of having nothing to prove and nothing to disprove. That is precisely my position on this occasion. We are met here on a question upon which there is now, both within and without those walls, a perfect unanimity. We have no opponents; I believe we have no cavillers. I am put forward, then, on this occasion, I presume—after the most eloquent and suggestive speech which we have just heard,* which may furnish texts and matters for much future comment and discussion to the members of the Athenæum—I am put forward on this occasion, I presume, as one of the founders and earliest members of the Athenæum, to express our feelings of gratitude to those gentlemen whom I see around me, distinguished by their genius, their rank, and their public fame, for coming amongst us on this occasion, to give us their assistance, and to countenance us; and I may say that on this occasion we have the pleasure of welcoming them amongst us when we can say we are prospering in their hands. The Athenæum has been well described as being a society for self-culture. It is self-supporting. It was from the first self-supporting. It was, I may say, a donation, so far as the building goes,

* Mr. Disraeli's.

from the employers of this town to the employed; but from the first origin of the Athenæum, in the nature of its rules and objects, it has been wholly in the hands of its members; and if it has struggled through a period of adversity, and been brought into the haven of prosperity in which we now find it, it is to the members of the Athenæum themselves that that honour is due; and if it would not be deemed invidious to particularize individuals, there are persons in this hall who by their personal exertions have mainly contributed to bring the institution into its present shape. But, gentlemen, though we the members of the Athenæum are self-supporting, still I think we should not forget on this occasion the very great advantages which are conferred upon us by such visits as we have received to-night; and after those which we had last year from Mr. Dickens and others, I think we cannot lose sight of the advantages which this institution has received, and will receive, from the sanction which those distinguished men have given to our institution. Not the least important of these advantages is the fact that, from the mixed political character of the gentlemen who surround me, our institution is at all events rescued from the charge—for I will not admit that the charge was ever deserved—but it is rescued now from the charge, at all events, of having a political party object in view; and I am sure that I speak the language and the feelings of every member of the Athenæum now present when I say, that I should consider that man the greatest enemy of the town, and of society, who should ever dream of

converting this institution to any party political purpose. (Applause.) I could not help a casual observation, as Mr. Disraeli was speaking, upon the position I filled on this bench; for with Lord John Manners on one side, and Mr. Smythe on the other, I think such a conjunction will at all events prevent the possibility of the Athenæum ever being supposed a party institution. (Applause and laughter.) We thank them, then, brother members, for coming among us, and producing such a desirable result as this; and now, taking advantage of this vantage ground, and having the full support of every sect, and party, and class in the community, I will ask, What may not the Athenæum in a few years become under these valuable auspices? I remember, in that most delightful work with which the genius of our chairman has lately supplied us—(Applause)—and, by the way, I would observe that I believe that he is the first man of distinguished genius who, in a work of the imagination, has assigned to a man of my order something like an honourable status in his pages—I remember his Milbank, and I thank him for it—(Applause)—and I remember Miss Milbank also, and I thank him for it. (Applause.) By the way, I rather think the original of Coningsby is here. I believe he is not married, ladies; and probably Miss Milbank may be here—(Laughter)—but I was going to observe that, in that most delightful work, Mr. Disraeli, speaking of Manchester, says, 'It is a philosopher only who can see and predict the future destiny of Manchester.' I'll venture to say, that that philosopher will, at all events,

have but one test for the future greatness of Manchester, and that that will be a mental test, and not a material test—that our destiny will be decided, not by the expanse of bricks and mortar, not by the multiplication of steam-engines, not by the accumulation of wealth; but just in proportion as mental development goes forward, and in proportion to the development of wealth in mental resources, just in the same proportion will our destiny be advanced or exalted, or the very reverse. Manchester, then, stands upon an eminence. We are not in the position in which this community can shrink from the test that will be applied to us; we are increasing in numbers; we are accumulating in wealth; and, therefore, unless we make progress at the same time in this moral and intellectual development to which I have referred, the expanse of houses and mills will be to the odium rather than to the honour of Manchester. And I speak not merely of Manchester, but of the surrounding district. Why, Manchester has its satellites of towns, each of them as large as ancient cities! Those ancient cities became celebrated in the world's history. How? Why, not for their wealth, not for the mere increase of their numbers, but because those ancient cities have left traces of the arts and of literature, which have immortalized the efforts of their men of genius, when their population has decayed, and their wealth has passed into other channels, and has been altogether obliterated. Such would be our fate; such must be the test of this and surrounding towns; and I would call upon the deputies who have come here from

Bolton, Stockport, Oldham, and the rest—I would call upon them, since we are no longer supposed to be a political party, I would call upon them to make this the starting point for establishing an Athenæum in every one of these towns—for each of these important towns would support an Athenæum, and render themselves worthy of the wealth and the resources which they possess. You do not need anything from me to urge the application of your minds to this pursuit, after the eloquent appeal which has been made to you; but I would say, in whatever capacity you may be placed, whatever may be your destiny, if you are to be wealthy individuals, your wealth will only be a tainted lustre, unless accompanied by civilization, and by the cultivation of the intellect. If you are in trouble, if you are in adversity, what so delightful as that honourable resource derived from the cultivation of the higher faculties, and which no bankruptcy court can ever extort from you? (Applause.) I read with the greatest pleasure a letter which has been sent to us from our old friend, Thomas Hood. You know the advice he gave to you the last time. He was then on a sick-bed. He is still an invalid. I will read the passage from the letter, for it is full of truth and pungent wit:—'The truth is, I am a confirmed invalid, and almost let in for still life; a condition irksome enough, and which would be intolerable but for the comfort and consolation I derive from the diversions of authorship and the blessed springs of literature. Fortunately, the head—that has a mind to it—may travel without those pantings which beset spasmodic lungs; the

thoughts can expatiate without such palpitations as result from the excursions of the legs. Forbidden to walk, there is the run of the library—(Laughter)—but I have already described the advantages of books and reading, by help of which even the bedridden may enjoy a longer range than Captain Warner's. (Laughter.) Suffice it, that experience and suffering have confirmed my former views—that, if anything could aggravate the evil of becoming what the Scotch call "a puir silly body," it must be a poor silly mind, incapable of wholesome exercise—without appetite for intellectual food, or the power of digesting it. And as age and accidents to the human machinery will impair the strongest horse-power of health, while the fairest mercantile endeavour may fail to secure a fortune, I would earnestly forewarn all persons within reach of my counsel —especially the young—to provide against such contingencies, by the timely cultivation and enrichment of that divine allotment which it depends on ourselves to render a flower garden or a dead waste—a pleasure ground visited by the Graces and frequented by the Fairies, or a wilderness haunted by Satyrs.' (Applause.) Ladies and gentlemen, on such an occasion as this I have, as you know, one rule. We are honoured by the presence of distinguished men who have come from a distance. I am here at home amongst you. I should feel myself doing an injustice to my own feelings, as well as to yours, if I were to occupy your time when so many are waiting to address you. I shall therefore briefly conclude with saying that I hope the brevity of my speech will not be taken advantage of

Chelsea, 25 Jany, 1843

Sir,

I had the honour, several days ago, to receive your invitation to the Annual Meeting of the Athenaeum; for which I can now only return my thanks and regrets. The state of my arrangements has rendered it impossible for me to come; and, in some accidental confusion, your Note itself has been lost, so that I have too long neglected even to tell you I accept any excuses; attribute my delay

Letter of THOMAS CARLYLE. [p. 139 1st]

to something better than that.

Your Institution, if I rightly understand it, is one to which all rational men will wish success. To provide the working people with a Place of Resort, where they might enjoy books, perhaps music, recreation, instruction; and at all events, what is dearest to all men, the society and sight of one another: this is a thing of palpable utility, a thing at once wise and greatly needed;—it is a thousand pities this were not brought to pass, straightway, in all working towns! I have regretted much, in looking at your great Manchester, and its thousandfold industries and conquests, that I could not find, in some quarter of it, a

hundred acres of green ground with trees on it,
for the summer holidays and evenings of our
ale & enquiring industrious men; and for win-
-ter-season and bad weather quite another
sort of social meeting-places than the Gin-
-shops afford!—May all this, and much else
be amended. May good and best Heed at-
-tend you and your benevolent associates
in your attempts to amend somewhat
yet.

I remain, with thanks and good
wishes,

Yours very Truly

T. Carlyle

[*Mr. Carlyle's wish for green ground and trees was partly fulfilled soon afterwards; but the supply of social recreation for "winter or bad weather" is more in arrear.*]

London 1 Devonshire Terrace
York Gate Regents Park
Tenth October 1843.

Dear Sir

I am exceedingly glad to receive so good a report of our Athenæum prospects. and I hope when I next hear from you, I learn that everything continues to realise your expectations.

Pray assure the Ladies' Committee and the Bazaar Committee, of the great gratification I have in their kind and flattering recollection of me.

Many thanks now for the Manchester News papers — in which

the proceedings of the other night are remarkably well reported. If you should see, or know, any of the gentlemen who attended for the Press, I wish you would say as much from me, in common justice.

Dear Sir
Faithfully Yours
Charles Dickens

Edward Watkin Esquire
Peter Berlyn Esquire

Private

Gentlemen.

I rec^d your note yesterd
for Smythe will positively
come he assured me a few
days back. He is at
present in Germany, but
will return in a month.
His Cardwood were, that
nothing shd prevent him
being at Manchester, on

I

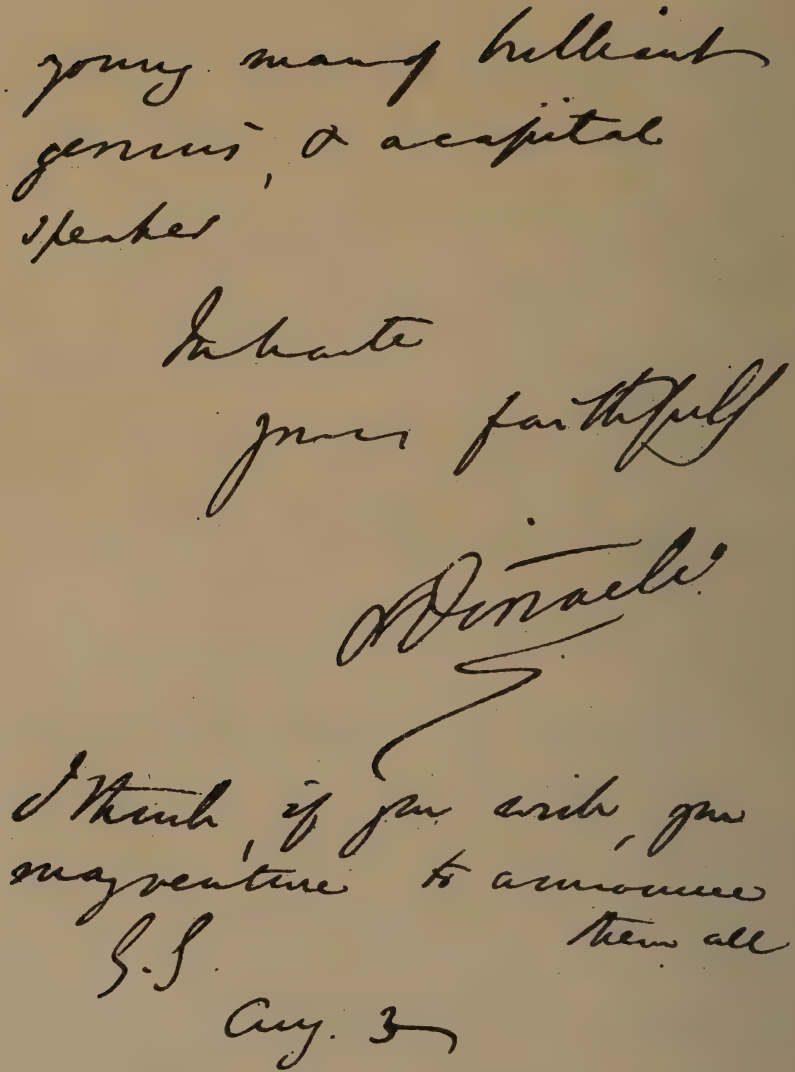
I authorize you therefore to
announce his presence
a certainty.

Ld. John Manners you
will probably hear from him
the course of a few days. I
know him involved with
engagements in which he had
entered before he received
yr. invitation & probably
in endeavouring to extricate
himself

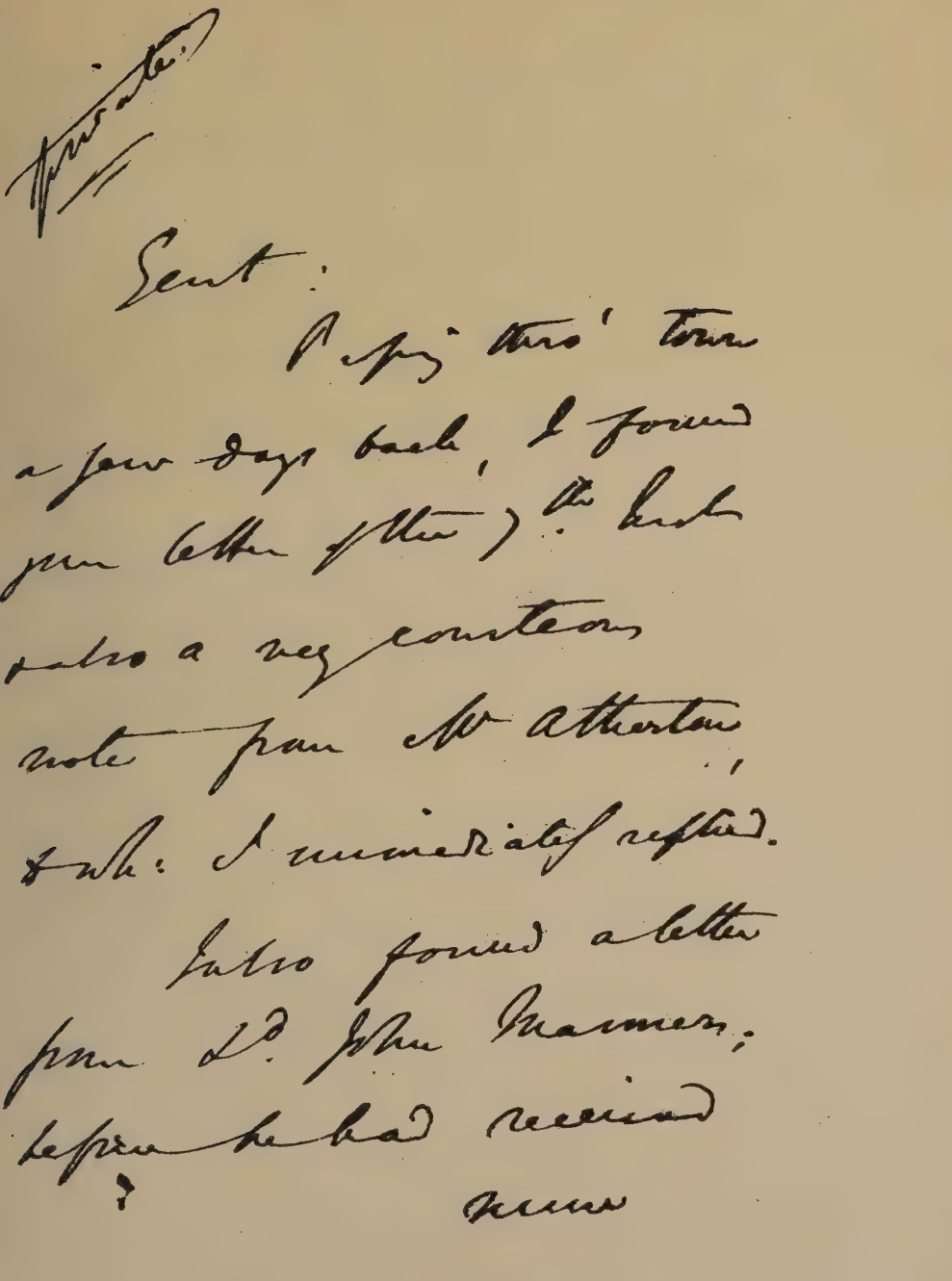
Mr Peachey expressed
when I saw him last in
the House, that he should make
every possible exertion to be
present; & I think I could
keep there.

Mr Milnes with Philip Duff
on. of his cousins = but at
y^e close of the present moment
The most important point
y^t M^r Smythe shows a

yours



Dated from Grosvenor Gate, Aug. 3, 1844.



Letter of BENJ. DISRAELI. [p. 139 4th]

mine (to which it was a
reply) I find he had
already communicated with
you. At that time Mrs.
L. I believe was not perfectly
aware of the nature
of your application to him
He says in his note to
me "It is rather curious
that

that the day before I had
your letter, I wrote to
Manchester says, if
possible, I wd. attend
the meeting. I had been
undecided if required a
positive answer, imagining
that all the world was
asked. You may however
rely on me if I am
not moved upon the
Grampians

Shakspeare adorned
as the Sky. The carriage
& horses will however
certainly contain my Scotch
town, as it will give me
up three weeks."

Mr. Johnson will therefore
certainly be at Manchester
on the 3d., as far as human
plans can prevail, as
he never fails from what
he says; & writes this,
that

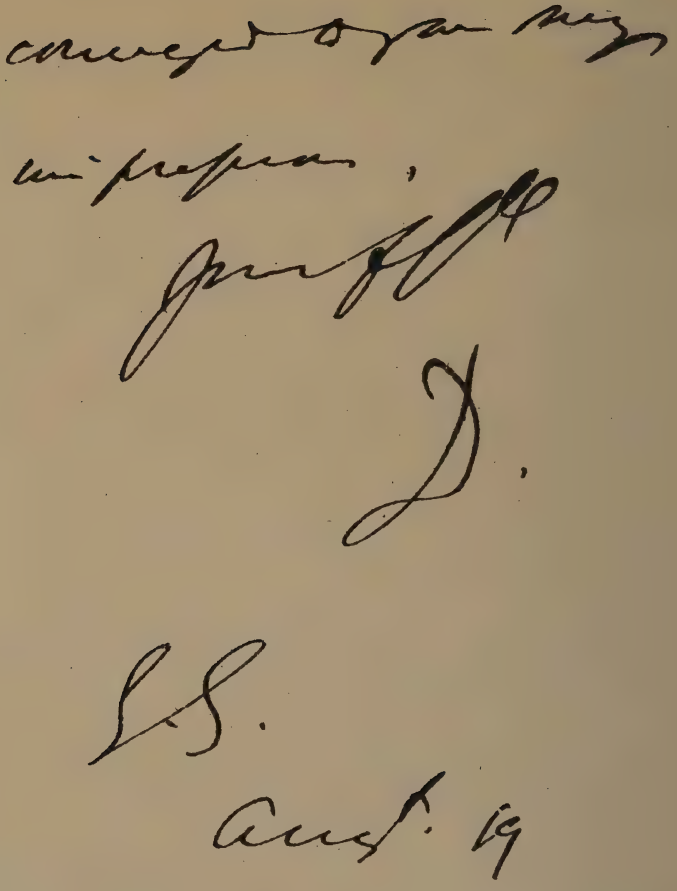
that bearing in mind,
that all together come
purposes from Germany
their Lordships relinquish,
in great measure, their
Scotch Town to testify their
feelings towards your Town
& visitations, you will be
careful to place them
in your arrangement

P

of the Insurrection, in a
prominent position.

I shall leave
this for Buenos Ayres in the
course of the week
where I shall remain
until I visit you.
You had better continue
to receive & address
me

the harvest here.
I thought it expedient
to send you this rough
despatch, (with as
several hundred
letters to write, before
I leave town, I fear
I have very imperfectly
conveyed



Date.—Grosvenor Gate, Aug. 19, 1844.

by those who follow me, because if it is I should feel I was doing injustice to you by setting a bad example. I say, in conclusion, to those who form the deputations, as well as to the members of the Athenæum, it is upon you that will depend the future character of these institutions. You are Young Manchester. We have 'Young England' here to-night. (Loud cheers.) Do you therefore go on, as you have gone on, through great difficulties; go on, applying the same energies to the advancement of the interests of this institution, and of kindred institutions in all the neighbouring towns; do that, by which I firmly believe that you are not merely adding to your own stores of happiness, but that you are trying to elevate the community among which you live; and upon you will depend the future greatness of Manchester, and of the surrounding community." (Applause.)

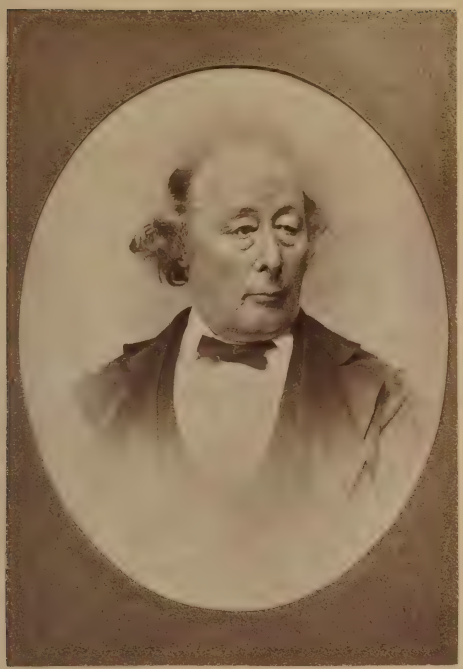
I append *fac-simile* copies, obtained by photo-lithography, of letters received, in connexion with our Athenæum proceedings, from Carlyle, Dickens, and Disraeli.

MR. COBDEN AND THE TAXES ON KNOWLEDGE.

My friend Mr. Collet has placed at my disposal a number of letters which he received from Cobden and Milner Gibson in the course of the very long and uphill fight for the removal of three mischievous barriers to popular information and communication, viz., the Advertisement Duty (repealed in 1853), the Newspaper Stamp (repealed 1855), and the Paper Duties (repealed 1861).

These letters illustrate anew the tactical wisdom that Cobden displayed in his legislative campaigns. They also show how well he had laid to heart some of the lessons of experience in the agitation of the League. They furnish incidental proof that the very success of that movement, by taking away the sharpest stings from popular discontent, led to a degree of popular apathy which made further reforms the more difficult. Mr. Cobden was characteristically alive to this, and doubtful whether others saw it as plainly.

The first letter was a reply to one requesting Mr. Cobden to include the newspaper stamp among the taxes which he



C. D. COLLET, Esq.

To face p. 140

proposed to repeal in his "Budget," published by the Liverpool Financial Reform Association :—

No. 1.

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*22nd January*, 1849.

"Sir,

"I beg to acknowledge the receipt of an address from the People's Charter Union, the contents of which shall have my very best consideration, and

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"RICHD. COBDEN.

"Mr. C. D. COLLET."

The second indicates the early connexion of Mr. Gibson with the cause :—

No. 2.

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*7th December*, 1849.

"My dear Sir,

"I am of opinion that you could not do better than put the matter in Gibson's hands; his animus is fairly roused upon the question, and I have no doubt he will do you justice.

"And believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"RICHD. COBDEN.

"FRANCS. PLACE, ESQ."

The following speak for themselves:—

No. 3.

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*20th March*, 1851.

"Dear Sir,

"Your address is too long by half.

"Yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"Mr. COLLET."

No. 4.

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*28th April*, 1851.

"Dear Sir,

"I doubt the policy of your penning an acrimonious attack against the I. R.* Board. Prove their inconsistency and injustice as much as possible by facts brought out before the Committee, and involve them in as much embarrassment as you can by arraying against them their own contradictory decisions and interpretations of the law. But do not make personal or vindictive attacks upon them. I am not without hope that we may bring Mr. John Wood to such a view of the whole matter as may induce him to recommend an alteration of the law.

"And I am, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"Mr. C. D. COLLET."

* Inland Revenue Board.

No. 5.

"MIDHURST,

"*14th August*, 1851.

"Dear Sir,

"I advise you to see Mr. Bright, who lives at Rochdale, half-an-hour by rail from Manchester, and who will give you any aid or information in his power in promotion of your objects. If you see Mr. George Wilson, this note will be an introduction for you. It will be a tough battle to get rid of the penny stamp. Nearly all the Newspapers are against it. Have you seen the printed circular containing extracts from the 'Scotsman' and many other Scotch papers, all abusing the Committee and its report? Did you observe a letter in the 'Examiner,' afterwards transferred to the 'Times,' in which it is proposed that *supplements* should be allowed to be printed without stamp and go free of postage? *That* would just suit the 'Times' and the other *monster* papers, but would be the ruin of smaller journals. You must form societies in as many places as possible, to get up petitions before the meeting of Parliament.

"I remain, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"Mr. C. D. COLLET."

No. 6.

"HOUSE OF COMMONS,

"*4th May* (1852).

"Dear Sir,

"We are not ripe at present, I think, for a great meeting in the Theatre. There must be some preliminary agitation in a smaller way.

"Hitherto I have been struck at the very little spontaneous movement amongst the people upon this most important question.

"I am, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 7.

"*Saturday, 2nd April* (1853).

"Dear Sir,

"I shall not be able to be present on Wednesday, and I merely write to say that I hope in any observations you may address to Lord Aberdeen you will not take a tone inconsistent with that very moderate and humble position which we really occupy in the world at the present moment. With the influential part of the Press against us, with the people apathetic, with all kinds of agitation choked with the big loaf, it would be only acting the part of Bobadil if we were to assume an unbecoming tone of swagger or defiance.

"Make out your case as strongly as you can on the grounds of justice, education, and morality; but don't assume too strongly on the part of the public a sense of *grievance* of which there is really but little evidence, and, above all, don't breathe a syllable of menace or defiance.

"Believe me, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 8.

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*23rd April*, 1853.

Dear Sir,

"I suppose you have seen that the Chancellor of the Exchequer now shifts his ground and talks of allowing a supplement to be sold unstamped containing advertisements *and* news. This will be reversing the *ad valorem* principle with a vengeance, and charging only the same tax upon two large sheets, as upon one small one. It will create a few big papers throughout the country, and destroy all chance of competition on the part of the second and third-class journals. What should we say if it was proposed to lay the same tax upon all table cloths and *napkins?* the latter would soon cease to be manufactured.

"Yet I am afraid the majority of the provincial Press, endangered by this scheme, do not see their danger.

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 9.

"MIDHURST, SUSSEX,

"*28th August*, 1853.

"My dear Sir,

"You are a very cool young gentleman! To send me a printed circular to sign, without having ever shown me MS. or proof! However, I am on too good terms with you, after the luck which last session attended us,* to quarrel about it, or any other liberty you may be bent on taking. But would not something like the enclosed be better? In your paper you speak of sixpenny subscriptions from working men. I never knew anything of the kind pay its expenses. The difficulty is to find honest canvassers. No: if any considerable amount be raised, it must be in good round sums; and, generally speaking, it is the same class (and not a numerous one) which gives the money for all good works. I don't see the necessity of keeping a separate account up to the end of the financial year—I mean I don't see the policy of abstaining from another appeal, even to the same parties, for subscriptions until Michaelmas. The enclosed circular is of so general a kind that it will do for the whole of next year. My proposal to double the subscription must, of course, be submitted to Mr. Novello. I don't object to any verbal alterations, or as many omissions as you like, from the

* The Repeal of the Advertisement Duty, carried against the Government.

enclosed; but I confess I would rather sign something like the enclosed than your circular, and remain,

"Truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 10.

"MIDHURST,

"14*th September*, 1853.

"My dear Sir,

"I thank you for the copy of the Address, &c., of the Association, which has just reached me here. I also received duly the copies of the printed begging letter signed by Mr. Novello and myself. What course do you intend to take to raise money and to agitate during the winter? Especially, how do you intend to raise money?

"Has the idea of a contribution from the newspapers of a day's saving been given up?

"That idea could only be carried out with a view to paying off the *debt* incurred in abolishing the advertisement duty, for very few of the *advertising* papers would help you to remove the stamp. As respects a canvass for subscriptions, it can only be successful when you apply for *round* sums to the *givers*, and the beggar must be himself one of the givers. Have you any idea of an organization for this

purpose? Pray abandon all idea of getting money in small subscriptions, and believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 11.

"MIDHURST,

"*20th September*, 1853.

"My dear Sir,

"My movements are somewhat beyond my own control. I go to the Edinburgh Peace Conference, to have a shy at those "Brummagem Democrats" who hope to elevate the Millions by wars, debts, and little shillings, on the 14th October, and it is possible I shall be obliged to pay another visit to the North before Xmas, certainly before the meeting of Parliament. Therefore I am not able to predict the exact time when it will suit me to attend a demonstration in honour of Gibson. But I shall be delighted to have an opportunity of joining in such a compliment. The graceless public little knows how much it is indebted to him for the repeal of the advertisement duty.

"For the reason above stated, I do not see my way for making any engagement to be present at meetings in Yorkshire. Such meetings ought to originate locally, and the M. P. is not on safe ground unless he attend at the spontaneous instance of his constituents.

"As respects the new law, I am not able to say what prospect there is of your being able to pick holes in it. I never had much faith in that kind of tactics; but if you can worry the law officers, or the Board of Inland Revenue, without expense or risk to yourself, or those acting with you, you have my hearty consent to do so as often as you like.

"With respect to subscriptions, I have no faith in anything but a personal canvass amongst the regular victims or *givers*. Printed circulars are always treated as waste paper. If I can do anything amongst the friends of Peace (who are the allies of all good men) at Edinburgh, I shall gladly make use of the opportunity, and remain

"Very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ.

"I agree with you that our question lies at the foundation of the teetotal cause."

No. 12.

"MIDHURST,

"*18th November*, 1853.

"My dear Sir,

"Where are you and what are you about? Do you know where Gibson is? Who is the writer of the pamphlet "An Argument for Cheap Morning Papers"? a reprint,

published by Cousins. The author knows all about it. By the way, I got a letter yesterday from the publisher of a penny West Sussex paper, Mr. W. Mitchell, Arundel, who has been stopped in his endeavours to shed a ray of light upon this region of mental darkness by the Stamp Office, and has been fined 5*l.* as an encouragement for his educational efforts. He has given me some really curious and interesting facts as to the numbers of his *penny* publication he was circulating in the villages of his district, and the number of customers he lost when he was obliged to stamp his paper and charge double price. The whole rank and file in some villages were swept away by this shot from the Inland Revenue Office, and no doubt it was intended.

"What right has Giles the plowman, or Hodge the carter, to think of buying a newspaper? It would only make them discontented, and that might lead to poaching. You shall see his letter, if you will let me know where it will find you.

"And I remain,

"Very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 13.

"MIDHURST,

"*22nd November*, 1853.

"My dear Sir,

"'I think we ought to strain every nerve to get the paper duty off this year.—C. D. COLLET.'

"Now, pray, don't injure your nerves in any such unnecessary labour. If Gladstone have the surplus to bear it, he will take off the paper duty as a financial measure recommended by sound policy, with which he will be glad to associate his name; but I want to ask you, Mr. Collet, what excuse a government can have that pretends to promote education in keeping on the newspaper stamp, with a surplus large enough to remove the paper duty? No, our business is with the stamp. That is not, as you know, regarded as a financial but political question, and we must 'strain every nerve' to bring the Government and Parliament to book on that question. I approve of your plans as far as they go. I mean you are quite right in worrying the Exchequer and the Inland Revenue Board; but the way, and the only way, to bring a sufficient force of moral power to our aid, and to put the *education-loving Government* in a crucible from which they never can escape, with the dross of the taxes on knowledge sticking to them, is by making it an education question.

"I intend to do so, and to express unmeasured contempt of the professions of those *soi-disant* educationalists who maintain the stamp.

"Read the enclosed. Here is a beautiful proof of the way in which the stamp prevents a gleam of light from entering the dark agricultural villages of this part of Sussex.

"You must not make public the contents of this letter, but return it to me. I will have the writer's consent by-and-bye, after he has made fresh arrangements, to use

these facts. How can the hypocrites who uphold the stamp face such a statement as this, and still pretend to favour education. I have told Mitchell to write to you.

"Yours, &c.,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 14.

"BOGNOR,

"*5th December*, 1853.

"My dear Sir,

"I have made a few trifling corrections in your letter. There is so much strength in your argument that it is a pity to weaken it by a single epithet of an offensive kind.

"You are sometimes a little too plain spoken for your clients—I mean for those in whose names you speak—and it arises probably from your not always bearing in mind that the 'Association' does not always consist of the millions who will be benefited by the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, but of a few men who, having themselves the advantage of seeing a daily newspaper, would wish every man in the kingdom to enjoy the same privilege. If you had for your client the 'fierce democracy'—nay, if you could only have the support of one such spontaneous meeting as we have seen supporting the Grand Turk, or Miss

Cunninghame*—you might then fling saucy phrases at the head of a Chancellor of the Exchequer with consistency. But cast your eye over the subscription list of the 'Association,' and you will see how exclusively, almost, we comprise steady, sober, middle-class reformers—free trade, temperance, education, peace-advocates, who will stand by you from year to year, and gather about them a constantly increasing moral power, provided you handle them judiciously, and do not place them in a position in which they think they are committed to a *tone* of agitation which does not fairly represent their feelings. As an old master in that line, who served my seven years' apprenticeship, I must use the privilege of speaking frankly.

"The stamp is the toughest question, excepting the ballot, left for solution, and it has the especial disadvantage of having the Press against it on interested grounds. Added to which is the serious drawback of wanting the enthusiastic help of the masses. A few intellectual leaders of the working class we may have, but as the millions of this country have never been habitual newspaper readers, and therefore do not feel the privation under which they labour, it is not in human nature that they should clamour for the repeal of the stamp.

"If they had never tasted bread, they would have been equally indifferent about the question of a big and little loaf. The case must be brought before Parliament and the country as an *education* question. We may shame the

* A lady arrested in Italy for distributing tracts.

present government into some concession on that plea. At all events, I am quite sure that Gibson, Bright, and I can smash all opposition in argument in the House as effectually when pleading for free trade in knowledge as when contending for commercial freedom. I send you a cheque for my subscription; be good enough to hand it to Mr. Novello, and acknowledge receipt,

"And believe me truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ.

"P.S.—Can you put your hand upon the extract from Lord Brougham's letter to me which I read at our last year's meeting in Exeter Hall, and which Bright quoted in the House on Gibson's last motion? If so, I shall be glad if you will send it to me. The quotation which I allude to refers to the difficulty the 'Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge' found in reaching the working class in the rural districts in consequence of the stamp."

No. 15.

"OXFORD,

"*9th December*, 1853.

"Dear Sir,

"Be good enough to let me know by return of post what dates are fixed for the meeting to Mr. Gibson, and the Annual Meeting.

"I wish to know as a guide to some other engagements, and remain,

"Very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ.

"Be pleased to address me, care of Rev. J. E. Rogers,* Oxford."

Mr. Milner Gibson was to be duly honoured, but the correspondence here shows how high stood Dr. Bowring also in the minds of his arch-censors three years later:—

No. 16.

"HOUSE OF COMMONS,

"*3rd February*, 1854.

"My dear Sir,

"I find myself in a most awkward dilemma, in consequence of having made an engagement for next Wednesday without remembering Mr. Gibson's soirée.

"Mr. Bright is in the same predicament, and we are both most anxious to attend the meeting.

"Can't you put it off until the Wednesday after. It would suit Mr. Gibson and Sir John Shelley better.

"Believe me, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

* The late Prof. J. E. Thorold Rogers.

This note from Mr. Milner Gibson to Mr. Collet relates to the same occasion :—

"*February 1st*, 1854.

"My dear Sir,

"Cobden, Bright and Shelley have spoken to me, urging that the Soirée should be put off till Wednesday week. The two former can't come. There is a dinner to Dr. Bowring that day which it seems can't be changed.

"We must put the soirée off till the 15th.

"Yours very faithfully,

"THOS. MILNER GIBSON."

No. 17.

"38, GROSVENOR STREET,

"*Monday*, [*Jan. or Feb.*, 1854.]

"My dear Sir,

"I don't know what you have done to secure a *full* meeting on Wednesday, but the first and chief test of success is in the numbers attending. If you don't *sell* sufficient tickets, you ought to fill the room from the *highways* and *hedges*. I have not much faith in your plan of blending of music and logic : both are good in their way, but in the agitation that I have been used to we have kept them apart. However, as on this occasion you are in a certain sense *rejoicing*, the harp and tymbril may be deemed

not out of place. But you must take a sterner and more business-like tone at the anniversary, and believe me

"Truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 18.

"38, GROSVENOR STREET,

"*28th February.*

"My dear Sir,

"I spoke to Mr. Apsley Pellatt, who agreed to take the chair. You must positively get some fresh speakers. To parade me and Gibson eternally is like a proclamation of insolvency, for it admits that you have no other resources. Besides, it tends to narrow the agitation into the bustle of a clique. So, pray, get other speakers.

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 19.

"MIDHURST,

"*5th June*, 1854.

"My dear Sir,

"As there was no 'House' last Tuesday, I had not the opportunity of seeing you respecting the subscription.

I have a list for £100—half of it M.P.'s, the rest good Quakers, who are always the first and foremost in all good works. The money has been paid to me with the exception of £5. I will hand you the list of names when I get back to town, with, I hope, the addition of some others. But this is a very small portion of what we ought to have to carry on the war with spirit at the present moment, when a very decisive effort is wanting to complete the rout of the enemy, already giving way. I think one of the best things that can happen is the starting of a good many unstamped papers for special objects—for instance, the Teetotal Alliance is about to print a penny weekly paper. The more of them the better, for as the Inland Revenue Board will not be able to prosecute, the regular *stamped* newspapers will by-and-by begin to call out for the removal of the stamp, to put them on a fair footing.

"When I saw Mr. John Wood in the Lobby of the House the other day, he seemed terribly out of temper with the Attorney-General,* and abused him soundly for having thrown the Inland Revenue Board over in his speech on Gibson's motion. He said that the Board had always acted under the Attorney-General's direction, but that in future he should never act without his *written* opinion. It is a very pretty quarrel, and I hope, in all charity, that it may increase with keeping, and that the public may gain something by the feud. I hope you are not running after the Eastern question, or other strange

* Sir Alexander Cockburn.

gods, but following up the one thing needful for all real progress, and believe me,

"Very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 20.

"38, GROSVENOR STREET,

"*12th June*, 1854.

"My dear Sir,

"I wrote to ask Mr. Novello to be good enough to call on me this morning, and I would hand him some checks, and have a little talk about financial matters, but I have not seen or heard from him. Do you know if he is in town? Are you mad to put out that advertisement about the City Election? How are we to get money for the Association in the face of such acts of folly?*

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ.

"In addition to my former list Peto promises £25."

This seems the proper place, in order of date, to intro-

* The Society for Abolition of Taxes on Knowledge (of which Mr. Collet was secretary) had issued a recommendation to the electors to vote for David Urquhart, "pledged to support repeal of the stamp," in opposition to Lord John Russell, member of a do-nothing government, &c. &c.

duce a letter from Mr. Milner Gibson to Mr. Collet on the legislative prospect :—

"My dear Sir,

"I happened to hit upon a clause in the Act of Parliament (1 Vict. c. 34, fol. 32) which seems to bear on your question about the legality of Treasury minutes.

"It enacts 'that in all cases in which a question shall arise, whether a Printed Paper is entitled to the Privileges of a Newspaper or other Publication hereby privileged, so far as respects the transmission thereof by the Post, under the Post Office Acts, the question shall be referred to the determination of the Postmaster-General, whose decision, with *the concurrence* of the *Lords of the Treasury*, shall be final.'

"The illness of the Chancellor of the Exchequer* puts us in a fix. I am afraid from what I hear that he won't be able to attend to business for some time. This lessens our chance of anything this session materially. Cockburn† said last night in the House, that he had made up his mind what ought to be done; and that the subject having been referred to him, he had drawn up a report, which would be submitted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as soon as his health permitted.

"Cobden is inclined to think they are really going to repeal the stamp; and I think so too, and that during the recess Rowland Hill will be put to make the necessary

* Mr. Gladstone. † Then Attorney-General.

arrangements for the transmission of Newspapers, &c., under a postage charge.

"I fear that we can't put the screw on sufficiently to get the matter settled at once.

"Yours faithfully,

"THOS. MILNER GIBSON.

"49, WILTON CRESCENT,
"*July 8th*, 1854."

No. 21.

"38, GROSVENOR STREET,
"*July 18th*, 1854.

"My dear Sir,

"I was out of town when your note came, and could not reply in time for your circular. I have given my name to the collector for £20, and will give him the money, too, but had it not by me when he called, for I find it going in a thousand rills, and only coming in one or two channels. But I am doing my best to get subscriptions for you.

"We must make a push now, and by dint of *persecution* I hope both the lawyers and ministers, to say nothing of John Wood & Co., will be tired of the subject, and give up the tax for the sake of peace and quietness.

"I remain, very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

No. 22.

"38, GROSVENOR STREET,

"*Friday Evening* (*March*, 1855).

"My dear Sir,

"Could you call on me to-morrow before 12, if quite convenient? I wish to know if there be any points you can suggest in the way of argument likely to be useful in the debate on Monday on the newspaper stamp question. If you have any facts bearing on the debate, I shall be glad to have them.

"We must be prepared for a very stout opposition.

"Believe me, very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"C. D. COLLET, ESQ."

But this year, as before stated, the stamp was got off.



THE FREE TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER, AS REBUILT IN 1855.

To face p. 163

MR. COBDEN AND SOME PERSONAL KINDNESSES TO MYSELF.

I FEAR it may be thought that these letters are too personal to myself. But they exhibit in the kindliest light the kindness of the writer:—

"DUNFORD,
"(near Midhurst), SUSSEX,
"*6th January*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"When lately in Manchester, I heard from S. Robinson that you had been to the United States; that you had been much struck with what you saw there; that we were being fast distanced by our young rival, &c. Since then I have seen an extract in a paper from a work published by you; but, being in an outlying place here, have no means of informing myself further about it. Now, if the book be not large, and can be sent through the post, I wish you would let me have a copy. I know how unreasonable it is to ask an author to give away his works; for, as Dr. Johnson said to Thrale, the brewer, in vindication of his own rule never to make a present of his writings, 'You do not give away your porter, Sir!' but I feel very anxious to know what you

think of the United States. I have long had my notions about what was coming from the West, and recorded my prophecy on my return from America in 1835. People in England are determined to shut their eyes as long as they can, but they will be startled out of their wilful blindness some day by some gigantic facts proving the indisputable superiority of that country in all that constitutes the power, wealth, and real greatness of a people.

"Hoping that you are quite well after your holiday, which you would not allow to be a holiday,

"I remain, very truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ.

"Have you an opening for a young man in your stable department, who would be glad to improve upon his present condition and prospects here, which are limited to nine shillings a week, and the reversionary title to the union workhouse? If you want honest flesh and blood in your establishment, in the humblest employment, where much scholarship is not wanted, I shall be glad to have the opportunity of sending you a raw recruit from this my native village."

"DUNFORD (near Midhurst),

"*8th January*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"Many thanks for your kindness in sending me a copy of your work, which, so far as I have gone, pleases me much. You could not have done a wiser and more

patriotic service than to make the people of this country better acquainted with what is going on in the United States. It is from that quarter, and not from barbarous Russia, or fickle France, that we have to expect a formidable rivalry, and yet that country is less studied or understood in England than is the history of ancient Egypt or Greece. I should like to go once more to America, if only to see Niagara again. But I am a bad sailor, and should dread the turmoil of public meetings when I arrived there.

"My impression of Kossuth's *phrenology* was,* that there was not power or animal energy sufficient to account for the ascendancy he acquired over a turbulent aristocracy and a rude uncivilized democracy. The secret lies evidently in his eloquence, in which he certainly surpasses any modern orator; and taking all things into account, he is, in that respect, probably a phenomenon without equal in past or present times. I fear when the French news reaches America,† it will damp the ardour of his friends there, and make them more than ever resolved to 'stand upon their own ground' rather than venture into the quagmire of European politics. It has confirmed me in my non-intervention policy. It is evident that we know nothing about the political state of even our next neighbours, and how are we likely to be better informed about Germany or Italy? *Their ways are not our ways.* Let us not attempt to judge them by our standard. Let us endeavour

* Kossuth had but lately arrived in England, and delivered the wonderful speeches in his newly-acquired English.

† News of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*, December 2nd, 1851.

to set them a good example. If 36 millions of Frenchmen, or 46 millions of Germans, submit to a despotic government, it is because they do not really desire anything better. If they wished for a different form of government they could have it. What presumption in *us* to think that our interference in the matter can be necessary.

"Believe me, faithfully yours,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ."

"DUNFORD (near Midhurst),
"*14th January*, 1852.

"My dear Watkin,

"Many thanks for your kind attention to my request. Sixteen shillings a week will turn the head of my *protégé*, it being just double what he would be able to get in a regular way here.

"I finished your travels the second time of your book in hand, and return you thanks for the pleasure and instruction you have afforded me. Never did anybody see so much in so little time, and report so much in such small compass. You are too modest in disclaiming literary pretensions. The artistic talent of book-making is in you, if it were worth your while to take time to apply it. But you are destined to be otherwise, and I trust equally usefully employed than in following the path of authorship.

"You talk of my going to America, and then coming back to tell the people here what is going on beyond the Atlantic. I have never missed an opportunity of trying to

awaken the emulation and even the fears of my countrymen, by quoting the example of the United States. But the only result is, that I am pretty freely charged with seeking to establish a republican government here. To shut our eyes to what is going on there is almost as sage a proceeding as that of the ostrich when he puts his head under a sand-heap. However, whether we will or no, we shall hear of the doings of the Americans.

"Believe me, faithfully yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"HOUSE OF COMMONS,

"*March 6th*, 1857.

"My dear Watkin,

"Can I do anything to help you at Yarmouth?* If so, I shall be glad to hear from you. Having had you for a colleague when you were in your teens, and watched you ever since, I take great interest in your present undertaking.

"We want some men of your age and active energies in the House, and, without flattery, I predict for you, both in debate and committees, a useful career.

"The misfortune is generally that men of business come into Parliament too late in life, after their powers are exhausted; but you, having secured an honourable independence early in life, and having wisely resolved to apply your talents to the public service, will, I feel convinced, have a successful career.

* This refers to my first candidature for the House of Commons.

"Let me know if I can help you, and with my best wishes for your success, believe me

"Truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"PARIS,

"*20th August*, 1860.

"My dear Watkin,

"Enclosed is a letter from my friend Chevalier, but he writes, like most Frenchmen, so badly, that I had better give an interpretation. He says you are right in your view as to the case in question, and yet I am not quite sure that the law in France does correspond with anything which could exist in England.*

"He says, by the law of 26th March, 1852, the City of Paris, when it enlarges or makes a new street, has the power of taking the entire line of buildings affected by the improvement, in case the parties interested would not have enough land left to put up proper buildings. The City can even take land out of the line of improvement under

* I was then a member of the Manchester City Council. I had found that in Paris one principle of street improvements was to buy the surplus land adjoining, and give the community the money-profit accruing from the improvement of the property, instead of letting it go into the pockets of speculators on the look-out for the measure. Fortified with Mr. Cobden's information on the subject, I was influential in the introduction of the same principle in Manchester, where previously the increased value of property resulting from a street improvement was left to the owners of land adjacent. It now went into the City Fund, in relief of the rates.

Paris.— 20 Aug 1860

My dear Watkin

Enclosed is a letter from my friend Chevalier, but he writes, like most Frenchmen, so badly that I can't [illegible] an interpretation.— He says you are right in your view as to the case in question, & I am not quite sure that the law in France does correspond with any thing which could exist in England.—

He says by the law of 26 Mar 1852 the City of Paris when it enlarges or makes a new street has the power

Letter of Richard Cobden. [p. 168]

of taking the entire line of buildings affected by the improvement in case the parties interested could not have enough land left to put up proper buildings. The City can even take land out of the line of improvement under certain circumstances specified in the decree. In such cases the City becomes the proprietor of the lands & after sells them to advantage.

The application of this law is regulated by the forms prescribed by the law of Sept 16 - 1807. These forms are very conservative of the interests of proprietors. It is by a decree discussed in the Council of State that all properties to be affected are

designated of the Council of State
gives great attention to the subject

Many subsequent decrees have
extended this law to the Cities, though
originally it was intended only
for Paris.-

I must remind you that we
have nothing in England to correspond
with the Conseil d'Etat here
which is a part of the
machinery of the Imperial
government.- Perhaps a correspondence
a little with our Privy Council -
But M. Chevalier tells me that
in that Council (of which he was
a member until he became a

sensation/ each property is subjected to a careful examination before it is appropriated.

I do not think from what I hear that this law is acted upon to the extent of giving a precompense to the City for any of their great improvements.

Return me yours &c

R E Cholson

E Watkins Esq

I send you by this post the two Laws bearing on this subject

certain circumstances specified in the decree. In such cases the City becomes the proprietor of the lands, and often sells them to advantage. The application of this law is regulated by the forms prescribed by the law of September 16th, 1807. These forms are very conservative of the interests of proprietors. It is by a decree, discussed in the Council of State, that all properties so affected are designated, and the Council of State gives great attention to the subject.

"Many subsequent decrees have extended this law to other cities, though originally it was intended only for Paris.

"I must remind you that we have nothing in England to correspond with the *Council of State* here, which is a part of the machinery of the Imperial Government. Perhaps it corresponds a little with our Privy Council. But M. Chevalier tells me that in that Council (of which he was a member until he became a Senator) each property is subjected to a careful examination before it is expropriated.

"I do not think, from what I hear, that this law is acted upon to the extent of giving a recompense to the City for any of their great improvements.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ.

"I send you by this post the two laws bearing on the subject."

"*Private.*] "LONDON,
"*2nd May*, 1864.

"My dear Watkin,

"As I see you are to 'walk over,'* it relieves me from any difficulty which I might otherwise have felt in answering your letter.

"I have been compelled to 'register a vow' not to interfere publicly in any election but my own, or when I have a vote. This has been rendered necessary by circumstances which I could narrate in a gossip. Now I have applied this rule in so many cases, particularly in the recent contest for Brighton, when I felt the greatest sympathy for Fawcett, that I should grievously falsify myself in those quarters if I departed from it now. In the case of Carlisle, my letter to my old Quaker friend, Carr, the biscuit baker, was strictly private, though he read a passage during the canvass. I have great doubt of the advantage of any *foreign* interference in election. For instance, in your present case, your usual diplomacy has neutralized the Tory opposition. If my name were obtruded, it could only tend to revive party feeling.

"I am glad you have written to me, as it gives me the opportunity of saying that when the vacancy occurred, I wrote to Mr. Sidebottom† to say that the rumour had reached

* This was at my first election for Stockport, on the death of Mr. Kershaw, M.P., when my return was unopposed.

† The late Mr. James Sidebottom, partner of Mr. Kershaw, the then lately deceased M.P. for the borough.

the lobby of the House that he or Sir James Watts was to stand; that, if there was no truth in this, I suggested PRIVATELY the name of Mr. Hugh Mason. I wish you to know that in doing so I had no idea of your being in the field. I since hear that Mr. M. does not at present wish to go to Parliament. You will, of course, be returned, and I shall, I am sure, find myself in nineteen divisions out of twenty when we may be present voting in the same lobby. As to your position as a member, your short proof shewed you to possess precisely the talent to command the attention of the House, and to insure a career the scope and usefulness of which will be in your hands.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN."

The following, of much earlier date, also bears upon election ethics:—

"AT S. SCHWABE, ESQ.,
"CHEETHAM HILL (near Manchester),
"*4th December*, 1850.

"My dear Sir,

"Your letter has followed me here, together with a copy of Mr. Byles' address from Mr. Judd.

"I have a strong aversion under any circumstances to interfere in the *personnel* of an election. In the present case, I could not take upon myself to do so for the purpose of asking Mr. Haughton to resign, seeing that I know nothing, excepting by hearsay, of his chances as compared with his liberal opponent.

"My advice, if solicited by both parties, would be that they make a *bonâ fide* canvass, and then that the weaker give way. Common sense would prescribe this course, if for no other purpose than to save the pocket of the candidate in the minority, for the weakest of *three* can never be the majority of *two*.

* * * * * * *

"Believe me, faithfully yours,

"RICHD COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

MR. COBDEN AND THE "ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS."

MR. COBDEN was a constant reader of the *Illustrated London News*. He knew the proprietor, my old and kind friend Herbert Ingram, who, with his son Herbert, was drowned in a collision on Lake Michigan in the autumn of 1860, and liked him very much. When the sad accident occurred no one was more grieved or more sympathetic.

I had to assist for some time in the management of the paper. During this time a suggestion was made of publishing a French edition, a proposal which interested Mr. Cobden very much.

The following letters will be read with interest:—

"*Private.*] "PARIS,

"*7th December*, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

"Your last letter, in which you spoke of a proposal for making a French edition of the *Illustrated News*, has only remained unanswered because it was an idea which I had no means of forwarding, or forming an opinion upon. It seemed to me, however, a plausible notion, because as the artistic part, which costs so much, is in a language common

to all, I dare say that if an edition in the type legible in China could be printed it would have a large sale in that country. However, my reason for now writing on the subject is to say, that as M. Persigny is now Home Minister, and has the press under his surveillance, and as he is a much more liberal man than his predecessor, and is anxious to promote a good understanding with England, I think you would meet with a friendly reception in any practical proposal of the above kind you might wish to make. Whether yourself or any confidential person should think it well to visit Paris on this subject I know not. But if so, I shall be happy to give you a letter to M. de Persigny, with whom I am on good terms.

"I leave Paris to-morrow for Algeria, but a letter addressed to me at the British Embassy will be forwarded.

"I am writing in some haste, and believe me,

"Yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ."

"ALGIERS,

"*1st March*, 1861.

"My dear Watkin,

"There is a person residing here, hermit fashion, named Hawke, who is descended from the great admiral of that name, and believes himself to be grandson of a Lord Hawke, about whose marriage in a Roman Catholic country there is some mystery. He is a quiet, amiable, and accomplished man, whose eccentric dress and long beard attract the notice of visitors. The English take a great

interest in him. A thought suddenly struck us that probably he might earn a few pounds with his pencil by taking some views of the beautiful scenery in this neighbourhood for the *Illustrated London News*. The accompanying sketch of the house where I am residing, and where by an odd coincidence Bright also lived when here, was done in a day. Perhaps you will not object to insert it in the *Illustrated News*. If so, I will pay Mr. Hawke whatever you wish, and it can be reimbursed to me when I return. Be as liberal as possible, that is to say, I hope the proprietors will pay him the full price which is ever paid for views of the size to other artists. More of course ought not to be expected.

"Will you oblige me by requesting the publisher to send me through the book post two or three proofs of the cut, addressed Algiers?

"By the way, the scenery of this neighbourhood is really beautiful.

"Excuse all this. I write in haste. For all this has been planned to profit by a friend's visit to England, who will carry this to London.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"ALGIERS,

"*7th March*, 1861.

"My dear Watkin,

"In my letter accompanying a sketch for the *Illustrated London News*, I said that Bright resided at 'Maison Chauve' in 1855, it should have been 1857.

"If your editor* should insert an article on Algiers, here is a point or two:—

"This place is attracting a great number of delicate persons from all parts of northern Europe for the winter season. We have English, Russians, Germans, Belgians, Danes, Norwegians, and Swiss. All the hotels (and there are five or six equal to any in first class provincial towns of France) are filled, and the numerous villas in the neighbourhood of the city adapted for the residence of strangers are generally let. It is said that Sir Morton Peto, of the City, who has contracted for the construction of the Boulevards and the railways of Algeria, has an intention to erect a large hotel in the most eligible part of the town overlooking the port and the sea, on a portion of the land conceded to him by the Government. The great and distinctive feature of the climate of Algiers is that, unlike Nice or Pau, or any other mild region of the Continent, it does not partake of the character of the seasons in Europe. As a rule, if the winter be very severe in England or Germany, it is cold in Nice or Pau. But, on the contrary, it seems to follow a different rule in Algiers. For example, the weather this winter has been exceptionally fine here, whilst the temperature has been almost unprecedentedly severe in England and throughout Europe. This is the nearest place where one can be certain of finding a second summer within the twelve months. Fogs and white frosts

* The Editor of the *Illustrated London News*.



COBDEN IN HIS GARDEN.

To face p. 177

are unknown in Algiers, that is, near the city; you have frost and snow in the interior, and the Atlas range of mountains is generally white with snow. The time of actual travelling between London and Algiers is about seventy-two hours, but the letters take generally five days. The climate is about the same as Egypt, to which the journey takes double the time. The sea voyage between Marseilles and Algiers averages from forty-five to forty-eight hours; to Alexandria from Marseilles takes from five to six days. The neighbourhood of Algiers is peculiarly picturesque, and the numberless foot-paths and bridle-tracks which thread the hilly country at the back of the city, offer a constant succession of varied views to the equestrian or pedestrian traveller. The carriage roads are also very excellent. I have no doubt that after it becomes better known, Algiers will become a residence on a large scale for those who are able to follow the example of the swallows and migrate to Africa in the autumn, to escape the winters of northern Europe.

"Yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN."

To the *Illustrated News*, and to a photograph lent me by Mrs. Cobden-Sickert, I am indebted for the accompanying picture of Mr. Cobden seated in his garden at Dunford House—the place of his birth, and of his residence when he had rebuilt it.

THE COBDEN TREATY.

I HAVE mentioned previously* a meeting with Mr. Cobden at the office of Mr. Sale, the solicitor, Mr. Cobden's brother-in-law, in Princess Street, a short while after Mr. Cobden's return from his visit to America in 1859. We had a long talk about the, then, very unsatisfactory state of our relations with France. Dr. Bernard, incriminated in the plot of Orsini to kill the Emperor Napoleon the Third, had been acquitted in England the year before. A dissolution and changes of ministry had taken place. Some French colonels had sent a loyal, warlike and anti-English address to their sovereign, and naturally John Bull began volunteering. But the cure for most things in vogue with the Free Traders was more trade.

It happened that on more than one occasion since the Revolution of 1848 I had been cognizant of personal appeals to and personal interviews with the Emperor direct. I mentioned one or two cases, including the direct intervention of the Emperor in the provision by the firm of Price, Potter, Walker & Co., of Gloucester and Grimsby, of wooden huts for the French troops in the Crimea for winter lodgment. I also reminded Mr. Cobden of the treaty-

* Pages 65, 66. (See the section "Mr. Cobden and my Father.")

making powers reserved to the Emperor by the new Constitution of France. At last I said, "I am convinced that if you would go to Paris, obtain an audience, and make your own appeal for peace, through trade the deed would be done." After a short silence Mr. Cobden replied, "I intend to go to Paris. I will certainly see some of those who have the ear and the confidence of the Emperor. I can try."

The French Treaty was the crowning work of the life of Mr. Cobden. Notwithstanding some unfavourable changes of tariff—changes which, had Mr. Cobden lived, probably never would have been made—France, our nearest neighbour, is our best customer—save only India, the exports to and imports from which were lately only about 1 per cent. in excess of the exports to and imports from France.

I was frequently in Paris during the negotiations; but I am afraid I was of little assistance except as respects the article of Fish, as to which I obtained a good deal of information, and Mr. Cobden succeeded in having "Fish" placed in the "unenumerated articles," on which there was a duty of 20 per cent. Previously Fish was excluded from French consumption, save that the English smack-owner, driven into a French port, might sell fish enough to pay his charges. Subsequently I obeyed Mr. Cobden's wishes in the inquiry about Canals in France; the Emperor's object was to cheapen transport. A M. de Mousette was sent over to obtain information as to the bearing of Canals upon the cost of Transport in England, and I assisted him all I could, and gave him my own recommendations for canal extensions under local control.

I give the following letters, which need no further comment :—

"*Private.*] "CANNES,

"*20th February*, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

"The article of Fish was not alluded to in the course of the discussions upon the Treaty, but I have no reason to suppose that it will not be included among the unenumerated articles. If it had been intended to be excluded, it would have been mentioned as an exception by the French Plenipotentiaries.

"There can be no advantage in stirring in the matter at present. As soon as Parliament has affirmed the Treaty, another Convention will have to be entered into for arranging the details of the French Tariff. I shall have to pass some weeks in Paris I expect on that business, which must be finished before July next. I shall be glad on my return to England if you will give me any particulars in your possession respecting Fish. In the meantime, be good enough not to mention my name in connection with this subject publicly. If you have any friends interested, you can tell them that you have good authority for saying that the article in question is not excluded from the French Tariff, but will come under the head of unenumerated articles.

"The Treaty will be better than it seems. I see people are arguing as if the duty on all articles was to be 30 per cent. I should not have thought it worth the trouble I

took over it, if it were not to be very different from that. But the less said about it at present the better.

"The French Government mean to effect an honest reform, and as they are giving up a very large amount of revenue from raw materials, they *must* levy moderate Custom duties on manufactures to indemnify the public Treasury.

"What fools the Tories must be in their opposition to this Treaty, which will every year, as it tells on our trade, redound the more to their discredit!

"The weather is very bad here. The surrounding hills covered with snow. I envy your Lancashire fires and carpeted rooms. Pray remember me affectionately to your excellent father.

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ."

"*Private.*] "34, CRAVEN HILL GARDENS, LONDON,
"*5th April*, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

"I return the enclosed with thanks. It is a useful paper to be sent to Milner Gibson to be used when the Navigation Treaty is under consideration, which I think ought not to be pressed on the French Government at present.

"*We* did not deal with shipping until some little time after we had settled our free-trade accounts with the items

of the tariff. I was a willing party to the postponement of the navigation question by the French Government, because I thought it was quite enough to brave the opposition of the whole manufacturing and mining interests without at the same time bringing into opposition all the sea ports of France.

"I shall return to Paris in a fortnight, or less, to settle the details of the French tariff. There will be a Commission of three, of which I shall be the head, to hear and present the case of our manufacturers, &c. Will your friends the fishermen wish to be heard? Do *you* intend to bring their 'brief' to Paris?

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ.

"Many thanks for your interesting paper upon Antipodean coal beds. But long before England is at the end of her coals the chemists will have discovered a cheaper combustible and a simpler motive power than steam."

"*Private.*] "MIDHURST,

"*12th April*, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

"If you were in the field* against Mr. Marshman only, my vote and interest (if I had any) would be at your service, but I should be sorely puzzled to choose between

* As a Parliamentary candidate for Stalybridge.

you and my friend Mr. Platt.* I can only say I should not like to be placed in the predicament of voting for one of you against the other. I heartily wish a speedy return to the House of both of you, if you are minded to be there.

"I will not fail to inquire into the coal question in France. Before long they must admit coal duty free, as the first of raw materials. I have little fear for the progress of free trade opinions in France. The French are a quick and logical people, that go by leaps towards any object they have in view. Once on the incline towards commercial freedom, they will travel at a greater speed than any other nation. With them, their own maxim, *C'est le premier pas qui coûte*, eminently applies. So let us have faith in our principles.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"ED. WATKIN, ESQ."

"LONDON,

"*18th April*, 1860.

"My dear Watkin,

"A Mr. Mousette, sent by the French Government to inquire about traffic arrangements in this country, will present a note to you from Mr. Bazley.

"I have told him that you can tell him everything. The French Government wish to reduce fares on minerals, &c.,

* Mr. Robert Platt, of Stalybridge.

in France. The object is *bonâ fide* in connection with the Treaty.

"Treat the Frenchman with all confidence, and oblige—

"Yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ.

"I leave to-morrow for Paris, to arrange the details of the Treaty."

"82, RUE DE L'UNIVERSITÉ, PARIS,

"16*th August*, 1860.

"My dear Watkin,

"I will get you some particulars about the Boulevard de Sebastopol in a day or two. Speaking to Chevalier about it, he says it is as you opine: the land was secured to a greater extent than was required for the street.*

"Will you be good enough to write to anybody whom you know acquainted with the fish interest, and let any information which may be necessary for enabling me to plead their cause in the new arrangement of the French tariff be sent to me by post within the next fortnight? What I want is the arguments which the parties would use if they were here to show to the French government that it is for the interest of the consumers here that fish should be admitted at a low duty or at no duty. Let the particular kind of fish be specified.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"I will write you again."

* This is a matter explained on a previous page (168).

"*Private.*] "PARIS,

"*18th October*, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

"As respects your proposal to write something upon the Treaty, I should, of course, be happy in any way to facilitate the object. But, unfortunately, I am so heavily immersed in the details of the French tariff (as any member of the Manchester deputation would be able to inform you) that I have not a moment's time even to answer an ordinary letter.

"The Treaty ought, by the original agreement, to be completed by the 1st November. But we have two months' work left for the last fortnight, and I do not see my way out of it.

"I hardly see how your editor* could deal with the Treaty till the new French tariff is published in a complete form. *Then* the figures will be very unintelligible to all but those interested in the articles of the tariff. The duties will be generally fixed by the 100 kilos.

"In about a couple or three months after the new tariff appears, public opinion, made up from the various trade circulars, and local organs of our various industries, will decide on the character of the Treaty. The verdict will no doubt be favourable. Almost every line of the tariff will give proof of an earnest and honest determination to carry out a thorough reform.

"The new French tariff will, as a whole, be far more

* The Editor of the *Illustrated London News*.

liberal than that of the Zollverein or the United States, or any other large State out of England. When this is known, there will be a change in public opinion towards France, and then if the *Illustrated London News* would give an impulse in favour of a better political and moral tone in our Government in its dealings with this country, you may do a good service.

"My own idea, of course, is that it ought to lead to an arrangement for putting an end to this absurd rivalry in our armaments. The difficulty in this would be on *our* side more than this.

"All I can say is, that if the gentleman in question comes here I will give him any information in my power, but I do not see the way in which at present he could write from this point of view.

"It is only the new tariff when published and understood that can form a text for useful practical writing on the relation between France and England.

"My wife will write to poor Mrs. Ingram.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ."

"PARIS,

"*3rd November*, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

* * * * *

"I observe that the *Times* is at its old game again, misrepresenting facts, and trying to keep alive the old hostility towards France.

"If you could obtain for the *Illustrated London News* any trades' circulars or reports of proceedings of Chambers of Commerce, or notices of local newspapers, giving favourable accounts of the new French tariff, so far as the metal manufacturers are concerned (the only part yet published), and suggest to the editor some remarks calculated to refute the misrepresentations of the *Times*, I shall be glad.

"To-day I have a letter from the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Sheffield, saying, 'The Council of our Chamber, at its meeting yesterday, instructs me to convey to you their sense of the deep obligations under which they conceive the manufacturers of this district are laid by your unwearied efforts to establish improved commercial relations between this country and the French Empire, and the favourable arrangement of duties agreed upon, to which they believe your labours have greatly conduced,' &c., &c.

"I have received several letters to the same purport from individuals connected with the metal trades, machine making, &c. *These are the only parties whose judgment is of much value.*

"The *Times* seems bent on preventing a good understanding existing between France and England. It pursues its hateful course even at the risk of destroying itself. People here say that it is in some way allied with the Orleans family. The real fact is, I believe, that its active managers and writers are an immoral gang and have no

fixed aim or principles of any kind. They are rapidly destroying its influence and diminishing its circulation—for which all honest men ought to be thankful.

"Believe me, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN.

"E. WATKIN, ESQ.

"P.S.—Since writing I have a letter from Birmingham, in which the writer (who was one of the deputation from the Chamber of Commerce of that place to Paris to assist us in the valuations, &c.) says, 'As I need scarcely say, everybody is delighted with the new tariff.'

"I don't wish for any personal glorification in the matter, all I desire is that reputable papers like the *Illustrated London News* should be induced, on the evidence of such undeniable testimony as that of the parties interested, to refute the lies of the *Times*, which paper is bent on perpetuating the hostile passions between the two countries—for reasons best known to itself.

"By the way, a letter was sent from here by my clerk to the *Economist*, answering some weak objections and giving some information as to the working of the *ad valorem* principle. This letter will, I expect, be in the *Economist* to-morrow. I think it is signed 'A. R.' Will you ask Mr. Dunckley to transfer it to the [Manchester] *Examiner?*"

On almost the same date I had received the following from another illustrious letter-writer, Mr. Bright:—

"ROCHDALE,

"*November* 2, 1860.

"My dear Sir,

"I send you a note to Mr. Miall. You will find him, I think, in Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, on the left-hand side going down.

"You once wrote to me about a projected Bank of India. I have lately heard from a Mr. A. H. Gunn on the same subject. Do you know anything of him, or the promoters of the scheme? If I were well up in banking business, I might join such a concern, but as I am not, I could only have anything to do with it in conjunction with men of great experience and first-rate character.

"But, on the whole, I think it probably better for me to keep out of all public directories, as I have kept out of your Board.*

"I suppose the Treaty is completed. What a glorious year's work for Mr. Cobden! Posterity, and even our generation, will say so, if the wretches who depreciate it do not get up a war.

"Yours very truly,

"JOHN BRIGHT.

"EDWARD WATKIN, ESQ. (Manchester)."

* This referred to the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway Company.

I turn back to trace this "glorious year" by a few brief notes in my diary:—

"Jan. 14, 1860.—Cab to Oldham. John Platt been to Paris; Cobden sent for him. A treaty of commerce really on the *tapis;* the Emperor's word pledged to Cobden. Cobden in great distress about his affairs. Mrs. Cobden's face reflects it plainly. She *would* have him (Platt) told. Platt assured her the middle class of England would *never* see Cobden go down. A subscription privately raised—£23,000 already. Thomasson* agrees to give £5,000 when they have got £25,000; but the subscription is suspended, or rather its extension, as Cobden, if all goes well, may be made plenipotentiary, and then 'what may not be got for him?'

"Jan. 16.—Great news; the Emperor declares for peace, free trade, and commerce.

"Jan. 17.—Tom Potter called (London Road Station), and read me a letter from Cobden. Speaks of the Emperor as 'his imperial pupil,' and the progress he has made. And (just like Cobden!) the letter ends with the story of some man condemned for forgery, who has left three daughters without help, and whom it is desired to send to Germany to school. Mr. Cobden asks that we should get

* The late Mr. Thomas Thomasson, whose son was M.P. for Bolton, 1880—85.



T B. POTTER, Esq., M.P.

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up a five-shilling after-dinner subscription for the poor things. So we shall. Dear old Tom Potter has taken the note on 'Change, and got £50 already. All again 'peace and be joyful' with the French nation!"

In the circumstances, the alertness of Cobden's benevolence, public and private, was surely striking.

Again (from my diary):—

"May 24, 1860.—Paris. To see Cobden.

"May 25.—Soirée at Cobden's, 69, Champs Elysées.

"Nov. 30.—Empress of the French in Manchester. Came like a shot from Glasgow last night. Stays at the Queen's (Hotel).

"(London). Bright up. Has been with Cobden to see the Emperor, whom they want to do away with passports."

Passports were done away with accordingly, as between France and England, for the rest of the Emperor's reign. It was not merely an international compliment, and a boon to travellers, but a gage of international friendship. We know to whom, on our part, we owed it. And it was none the less a boon and a pledge while it lasted, that the Emperor was (if some tales be true) plotting against us at a later period—after Cobden's death. At the fall of the

Empire, passports were revived; but, after two years' experience of the nuisance, it was again removed by the Republic, in deference to English wishes.

So far from Mr. Cobden being "made plenipotentiary," the annexed letter from him, the year following, shows that he had no official post at all. I had written to him with a view to put an end to the "breaking bulk," at the French ports, of goods traffic *in transitu*, but Mr. Cobden had to refer me to the Board of Trade or the Foreign Office. It was the Government Departmental officials who had, after all, the substantial reward of results that Cobden had personally and exclusively toiled to attain:—

"34, Craven Hill Gardens,

"London, 12*th July*, 1861.

"My dear Sir,

"I can hardly foresee any difficulty in your obtaining the privilege of introducing goods of all kinds *in transitu* for Paris, through the ports of Dieppe and Rouen. But it is a question on which the French Government can alone decide, for it affects their own internal regulations rather than *our* interests.

"I advise you, in conjunction with Mr. Schuster, of the Brighton Line, which must have the same interests as yours, to move the Board of Trade; and at the same time let the parties interested in Dieppe and Rouen move their

Ministry of Commerce, and, together, I should think you will succeed in obtaining your object. If, however, the further aid of my name should afterwards be thought useful I shall be happy to aid you.

"But I have no official post, and your better plan would be to go to the Board of Trade in the first place. If you go there yourself, apply to Mr. Louis Mallet, my late fellow commissioner in Paris, to whom present my card.

"Ever yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"EDWD. WATKIN, ESQ."

LAST WORDS.

I FORGET to whom the following letter was addressed, or how it came to be handed to me. I was not myself the recipient. It seems too characteristic of Mr. Cobden to be omitted here. It belongs to the period of the cotton famine :—

"*Private.*] "MIDHURST,

"10*th December*, 1862.

"Dear Sir,

"You should not apply to a M.P. for the character of a colleague, or inquire about his fitness to represent an out-of-doors agitation. *We* are not the best judges of each other's qualifications. Besides, I do not like the responsibility of standing godfather in these degenerate parliamentary days for any hon. member.

"As respects your agitation for financial reform, though I am grateful to any one who in these times of apathy and stagnation will agitate for anything, yet I confess to a considerable hopelessness in the matter. There will, I have no doubt, be some reduction in expenditure next year, simply because, owing to the distress in the North, the same amount of revenue from the old sources of taxation cannot be reckoned on, and the Government will not dare,

in the face of the cotton famine, to ask for new taxes. This reduction will not have been yielded to argument or reason, or to the wishes of the public; and it is my firm conviction that with returning prosperity the expenditure will be as high as ever. I do not believe it is possible, with our present parliamentary system, to enforce retrenchment in the *interest of the masses*. The House of Commons is too much in the hands of the aristocracy and their *allies* of the rich middle class to make economy in government the rule in England. How and when the electoral system in this country is to be altered, so as to give to the masses at least a chance of doing something better for themselves, is a question which I cannot pretend to answer.*

"I am very glad to see some public meetings being held in London to show to the world that the *Times* and other aristocratic and club organs do not, in their sympathy for the slave-owners, represent the feelings of the English people. I look on such demonstrations as very desirable, in order to counteract the efforts of those who will try to induce Parliament to offer some opinion in favour of recognition or mediation. I think it very desirable that more should be done to elicit the sympathy of the masses for the North.† It will be necessary to have some such counterpoise to the pressure which the blockade will put on public opinion in a direction hostile to the Federal Government.

* Household suffrage in boroughs established five years later; ballot ten years later; household suffrage in counties not till twenty-two years later.

† Thanks to Mr. T. B. Potter and others, much *was* done.

It is too probable that there may be some isolated acts of violence by slaves on their owners in the spring after the proclamation of freedom comes into force, though I hope such cases will be rare. They will be laid hold of to excite the indignation of this country. This will at least make it desirable that the true state of slavery in the South should be kept as much as possible before the public eye. If this American civil war goes on for a year or two, the consequences to Lancashire, and indirectly to all this kingdom, will be more serious than is dreamt of by people generally.

"I remain, truly yours,

"R. COBDEN."

Two other letters in my collection—one addressed to myself on the proposal to make Mr. William Rawson a magistrate; the second addressed, six years later, to that gentleman's son, the Chairman of the Manchester Stock Exchange—will end my epistolary examples of Cobden's steadfastness as a friend and mental "grapple" in business and politics:—

"103, WESTBOURNE TERRACE,

"*7th May*, 1853.

"My dear Watkin,

"I sympathise with you in your views about our dear old friend. It would not, I should think, be at all difficult to make a magistrate of one who combines in himself the two recommendations of having been Treasurer of the League and being now a director of your company.* Especially so as Strutt is, I believe, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, *vice* Christopher, with whom we might

* The London and North Western Railway was here referred to.

not have been so successful. But I would rather see the old gentleman M.P. than J.P., if it were possible.

"However, I will speak to Bright, and something shall be done, if possible, and believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"E. WATKIN, ESQ." "R. COBDEN.

"NEW YORK,

"*27th May*, 1859.

"My dear Rawson,

"Since my return to New York from the West I have seen Mr. Hamilton, who has introduced me to several persons of great respectability, who have inspected personally the tract of country through which his intended railroad is to pass, and who vouch for the existence of a vast forest of trees of both hard and soft wood, and of a large deposit of iron ore of great richness. These are undoubted facts. On the other hand, it is admitted that the surface of the land to be acquired by the company cannot be taken into account as of any value for farming purposes, owing to the extreme altitude, broken surface, and poor quality of the land. It must be self-evident that if the land had been desirable in quality and situation, it would have been cleared of timber and settled long ago. It is as wild and inaccessible as any territory in California or Oregon.

"The question narrows itself down to this—whether a railroad carried for eighty miles into a dense forest, and terminating for the present in the middle of a wilderness, and relying upon the carriage of iron ore and lumber, can be made to pay. I have told Mr. Hamilton that I entertain

great doubts on this; that I do not see how the supply or demand for such a great addition to the traffic in these commodities can be calculated on without a large outlay of capital in furnaces, saw mills, means of haulage, &c., which must involve a great loss of time, during which the shareholders would have no interest for their investment. He assured me that there were outlets at Albany and Troy for all that could be produced. But I reminded him that there were no furnaces standing idle, that the iron-masters had been very unprosperous in the States generally, that their profits held out no inducement to others to invest more capital, and that even if they did, there were no workmen to be had without still further increasing their wages, which were already so high as to be the chief obstacle to the success of the iron-masters.

"He offered to accompany me to Albany and Troy, to point out the outlets for the productions of the Company's land, and I fixed next Monday morning to meet him at the house of a friend of mine at Albany; but I have since received a letter in which, for a variety of reasons, he thinks it unnecessary that we should meet.

"Your friends are quite as competent as myself to form an opinion as to the chances of a railroad, terminating for the present in the middle of a wilderness, paying a dividend from the produce of a forest and an iron bed, without relying on a through traffic or passenger traffic, or calculating on the surface of the land being available for agricultural purposes.

"Mr. Hamilton goes to England, I believe, by the packet

which carries this. I shall follow in a few days. You are at liberty to show him this letter.

"Believe me, yours truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"Hy. Rawson, Esq."

I have now, perhaps, fulfilled the modest promise of my Preface.

I have partly pointed the way for some local annalist to trace in more full detail, and with less regard to Mr. Cobden's foremost place in it, the arduous work of the incorporation of Manchester. Hackneyed as the quotation is—

"Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem,"

the story would fit the motto. It would surely have been told before, but for the time and toil it needs to sift musty volumes of the local Press, between fifty and sixty years old, in which the facts lie scattered, obscure, and sometimes in seeming contradiction to one another.

Certainly it would be a story of more than local interest. One of Cobden's daughters—Mrs. Cobden-Sickert—to whom the proof-sheets of the foregoing sketch of municipal emancipation were shown, remarked the real historical importance of the subject, and, in what struck me as a most felicitous expression, said that "it opened new horizons."

The question starts up with some insistence—With two such monuments of local service already to his credit—the Corporation and the Athenæum—why was not Cobden sent to Parliament in 1841 for Manchester instead of for Stockport?

I was one of a faithful and zealous band of his adherents at a meeting held to choose a colleague for Mr. Mark Philips in the Liberal candidature of that year. Cobden was not present, but neither was he far away, nor quite uninformed of our intentions. He took no step in his own behalf. Our leader and spokesman at the meeting was William Rawson, the League treasurer. No orator, truly, but a sturdy upholder of Cobden's claims, as one who had made a name, and was plainly destined to a greater name, brilliantly linked with that of Manchester for ever.

The chairman of the meeting was Sir Thomas Potter (knighted during his mayoralty, after presenting the Manchester address to the Queen on her escape from assassination). He bore witness in his own way to the vigour and strength of Rawson's advocacy. But Sir Thomas, in this case, was dead against us.

He had been much prepossessed—as who could help being?—with the attractive personality and the honest convictions of Milner Gibson, a southern landowner who vacated his Tory seat for Ipswich to embrace the Reform politics of Manchester. Gibson had but lately charmed us all with the grace and point of a speech in which he likened old-fashioned social fears of Free Trade to the

alarm one feels at meddling with a single brick of an edifice rotten to the foundation. One touch of innovation might bring all down together.

Sir Thomas Potter was then our local political chief; he was one of those whom Gibson's merits had fascinated, and he was resolved that Gibson should be our choice. The meeting bowed to his desires as those of one who was indispensable to us.

Milner Gibson was adopted accordingly, and when this had been settled I well remember the little scene of Cobden's entrance to the room, and the unruffled cordiality with which he advanced to shake hands with his friend in the chair.

In the great Manchester meetings of a dozen years and more the names of George Wilson, as chairman, and Cobden, Gibson, and Bright as speakers, made an almost invariable programme. When it was all ended by what Cobden called the "stoning of the prophets" in 1857, it is interesting to see from his letter to Mr. Moffat (quoted by Mr. Morley) how differently he must have viewed all along the position of Milner Gibson as senior member for Manchester, from that of Mr. Bright as junior. Gibson (he wrote) "could not have been without the expectation that some day an end would be put to a connection for which there was no special fitness; and to have sat for nearly eighteen years for Manchester has given him a position which nothing can take away. I do not, however, think he deserved to be left in a minority. But Bright's case is very different. He was one of themselves"—and so

on, in the strain of just reproach and scorn of ingratitude and snobbery.

The case I have mentioned notwithstanding, the personal as well as political friendship between Cobden and Sir Thomas Potter flourished till death, springing as it did from the best qualities of both men. When Cobden had sought his aid in the foundation of the Athenæum, he was so much interested and pleased by the interview with Potter that he ever after styled him "Glorious old Tom!" At that interview Thomas Potter had given Cobden his hearty assent in the formula of a sort of "charge" which he was wont to deliver on all occasions of importance:—"It *ought* to be done! It *can* be done!! It *must* be done!!! And it *shall* be done!!!!" And there can be no question that most of Potter's pet schemes succeeded.

When he had been chosen mayor, on Mr. Cobden's nomination, at the premier meeting of the Manchester Council, Cobden presented him with the "gavel," or ivory hammer which a chairman uses to call for silence. It was thus inscribed:—

"THOMAS POTTER,

First Mayor of Manchester,

FROM HIS FRIEND RICHARD COBDEN.

A.D. 1839."

On the death of Sir Thomas in 1845, the little instrument became the property of his elder son (afterwards Sir John Potter, Mayor of Manchester, and also M.P. for



The Gavel at Manchester Town Hall. [pp. 203·]

the borough), and on that gentleman's death, it was presented by his younger brother (Mr. T. B. Potter, M.P. for Rochdale) to the corporation itself. It is still in use by the Mayors of Manchester, and now bears the additional words :—

"PRESENTED

TO THE

MAYOR AND CORPORATION OF MANCHESTER

BY

THOMAS BAYLEY POTTER,

1859."

Did time allow me, it would be easy to fill further pages of incident and reminiscence. I content myself with mentioning one of my latest recollections of Cobden in Parliament. It was in the year before his death that I met him in the tea-room or library of the House of Commons, the evening of an eventful Prohibition motion by Sir Wilfrid Lawson. Neither of us had quite made up our minds upon the impending issue. Cobden told me he had little sympathy with legislation of the kind proposed, but he would not vote against the motion. In the end, we absented ourselves from the division. But in the meantime we were approached by the very excellent, righteous-minded, urbane, and rather stately-mannered member for Leeds, the late Sir Edward Baines. "May I ask," said he, "how you gentlemen intend to vote on this interesting occasion?" Cobden, in his sprightly way, answered for both: "Why, my friend Watkin and I have decided *magnanimously* to run away!"

At my conclusion, I am reminded irresistibly of these passages in the "Table Talk and Opinions of Napoleon Bonaparte" (Sampson Low & Marston, 1868):—

"Rewards are not to be conferred upon soldiers alone. All sorts of merits are brothers.

"The courage of the President of the Convention resisting the populace should be compared with the courage of Kleber mounting to the assault of Acre. It is right that civil as well as military virtues should have their reward; Intelligence has rights before Force.

"Force without Intelligence is nothing."

A weighty tribute to Intelligence, this, from Force incarnate; and it may fitly end the tribute of memory and friendship to a man like Cobden, of whose great and wholly beneficent force his wonderful intelligence was certainly the mainspring.



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